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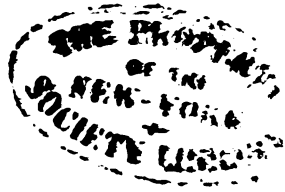

"I Wonder What He Saw before He Died?"
(Page 54)

THE MAN WITHOUT A HEAD

BY

TYLER DE SAIX

ILLUSTRATED BY

M. LEONE BRACKER

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THE MAN WITHOUT A HEAD

CHAPTER I

"WELL," said Comyns, "I can't see for the life of me what makes you want to linger on in this benighted hole."

"There are a great many things in this world we can't see," replied Hellier.

They were standing on the pier at Boulogne, the Folkestone boat was just departing, the east wind was blowing, and over the cold early spring day the clouds drifted, grey as the cygnet's feather.

Without wishing to paraphrase or parody a famous author, one may say that if one goes over to Boulogne and stands long enough on the pier, one will meet, most possibly, some one one knows—probably one's tailor.

Hellier had come over to Boulogne a fortnight ago to recruit from an attack of influenza; he was a briefless barrister, with two hundred and fifty pounds a year of his own;

his chambers were in Clifford's Inn, and he had a taste for that side of life which lends itself to romantic literature.

The novels of Gaboriau, absorbed as a boy, had given him his first impetus towards the law.

There is no manner of doubt in the world that housebreaking is the most romantic of the professions; after housebreaking, the profession that helps the housebreaker to escape the law.

A great criminal lawyer, with his armful of briefs, was the pictured objective towards which Richard Hellier had set his face; he had been called to the Bar eighteen months now, and his only client up to this had been a dog thief (*item,* convicted).

"I suppose there are," replied Comyns, "but there's one thing I can, the gangway is going, so long——"

He dashed down the gangway, the hawsers were cast off, and the screw churned the steel grey waters of the harbour.

Hellier stood with his hands in his overcoat pockets, watching the boat as she passed from sight, and wishing that he was Comyns.

Comyns was handsome, Comyns was wealthy. His father made bicycle lamps and motor horns in Wolverhampton, his grandfather had been a platelayer. He belonged to one of those families that go up in the world. Hellier belonged to one of the families that go down. When Comyns' grandfather had been laying plate, Hellier's had been eating off it. But the plate of the Helliers' had vanished as utterly as their past, and of all the story there remained a single punch ladle, a speechless, yet eloquent witness, to tell of the good times gone.

Hellier was a middle-sized man, and plain. Dark, clean-shaved, pre-eminently a gentleman. Just as a rose is a rose, or a pansy a pansy.

Let the handsome and superficial Comyns walk with him down the street, and out of a hundred and one women a hundred would have looked with appreciation on the motor-horn merchant's son, but the hundred and first would have looked with interest at Hellier.

He turned from contemplation of the harbour and came back down the pier slowly, breathing the keen east wind and wishing he was Comyns.

He was in love for the first time in his life,

and he was taking it badly. He was only thirty-three years of age, yet he was already summing up his life, looking back at his past, telling himself that had he not fooled away his time in the by-ways of literature and stuck to the hard high road of life, he might now have been well-to-do, like Comyns.

It is only when a man is really in love that he sees the defects in himself and his position, sees them with a preternatural and startling vividness—if he is a man.

So Hellier wished he was Comyns, utterly ignorant of the fact that if some magician had converted him into the object of his admiration, the woman he loved would not have looked at him twice.

He had only known her ten days. Her name was Mademoiselle Cécile Lefarge, he had met her accidentally at the Hôtel des Bains, and had fallen in love with her on sight.

When a man falls in love with a woman on sight it is through his desires that love comes to him. Her body takes possession of his mind. This kind of love may fade away or endure for ever; as a rule it is unfortunate, and fades; sometimes it becomes converted into hatred

when the lover, after marriage, has discovered how the flesh has betrayed him, what a base soul beauty has palmed off on him, wrapped in an attractive wrapper.

A bad bargain in love. Those five words contain in them the plot and essence of most of the tragedies in life.

Cécile Lefarge was twenty-eight, and looked, perhaps, twenty-six; pale, of medium height, voluptuously formed, dark, with blindish-looking violet grey eyes, serious-looking as a priestess of Aphrodite, yet with a nun-like spirituality, she was a woman to drive a sensualist mad with desire, a woman to inspire the dreams of a poet or a saint.

This was the woman who had captured Hellier, heart, soul and body; and the poignant, the terrible thing in his case, was the fact that he knew his passion was partly returned, that he had awakened in this being, that chance had caused to stray across his life, that something, that magnetic response, that deep, vague interest, which in a woman's mind marks the beginning of love. That he had done this, but yet that something stood in the way.

The girl was staying at the Hôtel des Bains

with her aunt, Madame de Warens, a pale-faced, mild and most practicable old lady.

They had a suite of rooms, and were evidently very well-to-do people in a worldly way. They had lived at the hotel for three years, they had no relations in the visible universe, and what friendships they made were chance friendships.

Hellier had not done badly, for he had gained the confidence of old Madame de Warens, as well as the attention of her niece, and it was mainly from the old lady's rambling conversations that he had gained his knowledge of their habits and their past. Also the hint of some mysterious cloud in that past, whose shadow still hung over them, some barrier that fate had slidden between them and society, causing them to lead this aimless hotel life, divorced from friends and relations.

CHAPTER II

HE came through the town and up the Grand Rue.

When he reached the ramparts he took a seat, despite the nipping east wind.

He looked at his watch.

Just about this hour every day it was a custom of Madame de Warens and her niece to take a walk on the ramparts.

It seemed the only fixed thing, except meals, in their desolate lives, this walk every day on the ramparts.

Hellier would meet them there. It was a sort of tacit appointment. No person, unless they were curiously blind, could fail to see that it was a rendezvous. The women came and the young man came and walked with them up and down on this desolate place for half an hour or so, talked about everything and nothing, returning to the hotel where he left them, perhaps not to see them again till the following day.

This afternoon they were late. Hellier looked at his watch again, it was ten minutes past the

time of the usual meeting. He was rising to return, with a desolate feeling at the heart, when, far off, coming towards him, he saw the figure of a girl. It was Mademoiselle Lefarge, and she was alone!

"My aunt was afraid of the east wind," said the girl. "I came because I thought you possibly might be here and waiting for us; we have got so into the habit of meeting you that really it was like an appointment—your society in this desolate place has become quite one of our pleasures," she said, "and it is bad to keep a friend who has given one pleasure waiting in the cold east wind."

This was plunging into the middle of things; she spoke with the slightest foreign accent, and Hellier, an Englishman used to the convention-bound female, could not find words, or thoughts, to reply to her with for a moment.

It was not an awkward silence. They paused for a moment and looked over the rampart wall at the peaceful country, just tinged by the early spring, trees and fields, belfries and far-off hamlets, all under a sky sad coloured and beautiful, like that sky which dwells for ever over the "Avenue near Middleharnis."

As they gazed, without speaking, the man was telling the woman that he loved her and the woman was telling the man that she cared for him.

It came quite naturally, when he took her hand and held it.

"I have wanted to tell you for a long time," he said.

She sighed, but she let him hold her hand.

Then she said, as if in answer to some question: "It can never be."

"I love you," he said, speaking in a plain, matter-of-fact tone, that would have told little to a stander-by of the passion that was consuming him. "You have come into my life suddenly, and if I lose you, if you leave me, I will be forever desolate—dear friend."

Her eyes filled with tears.

"It can never be."

There was a fatality, a hopelessness in her voice that told him that these words were no idle woman's words. It could never be. Never could he hold her in his arms as his own, never possess her. Paradise lay before him, yet he could never enter in.

"Why?"

"Come," said she, "and I will show you."

CHAPTER III

THEY left the ramparts and returned to the hotel. She left him in the hall for a moment, and then returned, and asked him to follow her.

He followed her to a door on the first floor landing; she opened it, and led him into a sitting-room, where in an armchair beside a blazing wood fire sat old Madame de Warens muffled up in a light shawl, with a novel open upon her lap, asleep.

It was no ordinary hotel sitting-room, this daintily upholstered room. It had, in fact, been entirely redecorated by a Parisian firm three years before, when the two women had decided to take up their quarters for good at the hotel.

The old lady by the fire awoke with a start when she heard them enter, welcomed Hellier with a little old-fashioned bow, and relapsed into her chair, whilst the girl, laying her gloves, which she had drawn off, upon the table, went to a door leading into another room, opened it, and motioned the young man to follow her.

He followed her into a bedroom. A woman's bedroom. On the dressing-table lay silver hair brushes and all the odds and ends of a woman's toilet, the little bed stood virginal-looking and white as snow, a row of tiny boots and shoes stood by one wall.

On a table, in a corner near the bed, stood something dismal and dark.

Something veiled with crêpe. The girl went to this object and removed the covering. She disclosed a bust.

The marble bust of a man. A marvellous piece of work.

A man of middle age with a pointed beard. A jolly-looking man, a forceful face and a lovable face, roguish a bit, with that old Gallic spirit that makes fun in public of the things that Englishmen laugh over in private, yet benevolent.

The face of a man who begins life as a delightful companion, and ends it as a delightful grandfather.

Looking at him one would say, "He might act foolishly, but he could do no real wrong; I would trust him with my last shilling——"

"He was my father," said the girl, as Hel-

lier gazed upon the marble, that, under the chisel of some masterhand, spoke, laughed and diffused jollity around it.

"He was my father and he was a murderer —so the world says."

Hellier turned slightly aside and placed his hand to the side of his head; he could not speak.

The shocking statement was made in such a calm voice. A calmness that spoke of what suffering endured, what shame, what ruin.

She arranged the dismal crêpe around the joyous thing.

Then she turned to lead him back to the sitting-room, and as she turned, unable to speak, unable even to think what to say, he took her hand and pressed it.

"I know," she replied.

He followed her into the sitting-room, and quite regardless of the old lady by the fire, she led him to one of the windows.

Merridew's library lay opposite, and as they stood and she talked to him they watched the people entering the shop and the people walking on the pavement.

"It was eight years ago," she said. "I

have not changed my name—you must have heard of the case. It was the Lefarge case—ah no?" She paused for a moment, "Eight years ago. I cannot tell you the details, but it was in the spring. An artist made that bust of my dear father. The artist's name was Müller; he had the face of a demon. I saw him twice, and his face still haunts my dreams. I see it now before me as I talk to you. It was a pale face, a weary face, the face of a man who has known all evil.

"He was a great artist, his name was Müller, a German, who lived in the Quartier Latin. He was known as the madman. My dear father allowed him to make that bust, gave him sittings, twice invited him to our house.

"When I saw this awful man," went on the girl, her voice sinking lower, "I felt as though I had seen evil itself. I implored my father to have nothing to do with him. He laughed. He had no fear of evil. He was all good.

"He called at Müller's studio one day; listen to me, my friend, for this is what the world says: he called at Müller's studio one day and murdered him.

"Listen to me: he murdered him, disappeared, and was never seen again. He decapitated Müller, and the headless body was found in the studio. That is what the world says. But he did not do it, I *know,* for I feel it here where I place my hand."

She placed her little hand, not to her side, but towards the centre of the breast, where the heart really lies.

"It is terrible," murmured Hellier.

"Terrible—oh, you cannot think!—and now you know why it can never be."

"If his innocence were proved?" asked he.

"Ah, then——" she replied.

Hellier took her hand and held it in both of his.

"Listen to me," he said. "I have seen much of life and men, I do not say it to please you or comfort you, but the face you have shown me is a face incapable of—that. If I could stake my life, and if it were possible for me to stake it upon your father's innocence, I would do so. I am a member of the English Bar; after what you have told me of the barrier between us, a barrier which is no barrier to me, I will do all that in me lies to remove it. Noth-

ing may come of my efforts, everything may. When a man works from love he goes doubly armed. Tell me, my friend, where I can learn the details of your trouble, not from your lips, for that would be too painful—have you no papers——"

"I have the *dossier* of the case," replied Mademoiselle Lefarge. "I will place it in your hands; I have belief in you. When I first saw you something drew me towards you; perhaps it was the spirit of my father—for I feel that he is no more—perhaps it was his spirit pointing out to me his avenger, perhaps——" She paused.

"Yes," said Hellier.

"Perhaps," she said, "it was an instinct that told me that some day——"

"Yes."

"Some day, I should love you."

The next afternoon Hellier returned to London.

CHAPTER IV

IT was in the year 1600, or thereabouts, that the family of Gyde first took its place in the history of Cumberland.

A family may be likened to a thistle; plant it here or there, and, if left, it grows and flourishes, it casts its spores, like thistle-down on the wind of chance, and the spores blowing here or there fade or flourish, as the case may be.

The wind of chance in the year 1600 blew Sir John Gyde to the wilds of Cumberland, from the original home of the family in Pembrokeshire.

How splendidly they built in those old days may still be seen in the house he made for himself.

Sir John was a gentleman of a very old school; had he lived in the present day, and did the law take cognizance of his pleasantries and way of life, he would have found himself, within twenty-four hours, in the gaol of

Carlisle, and he would have been hanged, to a certainty, after the lapse of three clear Sundays following his conviction at the next assizes.

In 1600, however, he was respected with that unalloyed respect which fear of a bloody-minded and powerful scoundrel inspired in the medieval mind.

For Cumberland, in 1600, was medieval to the core, and the core is tinged, though ever so slightly, with medievalism still.

Sir John Gyde's spirits, wine and tobacco, never paid duty, the smugglers of Ravenglass knew why. He was the friend and protector of all lawless scoundrels who put money in his pocket, and he hanged and imprisoned all backsliders who didn't. He had seduced other men's wives, betrayed other men's daughters, he had killed three men in duel with his red right hand and he was a justice of the peace. Throstle Hall was the name of the house he had built for himself, and Throstle Hall it remains to this day, a formidable old pile, standing close up to the Fells of Blencarn like an ancient malefactor, miraculously preserved for our inspection; walls twenty feet thick, a

courtyard full of echoes, dungeon-like cellars, interminable passages, intricate, like the convolutions of a thief's brain; little secret rooms, a picture gallery, where the dead and gone Gydes stand still, despite the rigor of death, confessing their sins by the expressions on their faces; their loves, their hates, and the fact, despite the beauty peeping here and there from the gloom of a dusty canvas, that the Gydes were a sinister race.

A scarlet thread ran through the history of the family; there was something appalling in the rapidity that marked the history of their succession. Death had had a lot of dealings with the Gydes, and the Gydes had dealt largely with death.

Sir Lionel Gyde had killed Sir Thomas Fiennes in a duel, and had been killed in turn by Sir Thomas's son. He stands, still, in effigy, does Sir Lionel, dressed in faded violet velvet and Mechlin lace, staring from the canvas straight before him, at the poplar trees waving in the wind before the gallery windows. He has every point that goes to the making of a handsome and debonair cavalier, but he has the pale blue eyes of a murderer.

Near him there is a canvas blackened out. It has a history not to be repeated. Beyond, another canvas exhibits a portly old gentleman. "Fox hunter" is written upon his face across "Port wine," and that was his history.

They were not all bad, the Gydes; the scarlet thread only appeared in the family texture here and there, but when it did appear it was vivid.

The fortunes of the family had been varied; the estates had been confiscated once and given back, it had cast spores as far as London, where Aldermanic Gydes had bloomed with great splendour.

In the Overend and Gurney business the family had, as nearly as possible, come to ruin; it was saved only by the genius for finance displayed by the present Sir Anthony Gyde's father.

When Sir Anthony, the man we have to deal with in this extraordinary story, came to his own, he found himself the possessor of half a million of money—a poor enough heritage in these days—Throstle Hall in Cumberland, a house in Piccadilly, and the reputation of being a fool.

He had gained the reputation at Christ Church.

The reputations gained and discarded at Oxford would make a very quaint museum, could they be preserved, labelled and classified, and when plain Anthony Gyde became Sir Anthony, and succeeded to the banking business, founded by his grandfather, he left his reputation behind him at the University in more senses than one.

The thing was as surprising as the bursting of a dragon fly from its sheath.

It was in November that the University lost an undergraduate, noted chiefly for a handsome face, effeminacy and a taste for collecting first editions.

In the following January, Lombard Street became aware of a new hand in the game of finance.

As a matter of fact Oxford had let loose, without knowing it (as she sometimes does), a very great genius.

The young Sir Anthony had the gift of seeing the inwardness of a thing; he had the gift of knowing what was going to appreciate; he had a nose that could scent rotten security

through all the rose leaves and figments heaped upon it by the wiliest promoters of companies.

He would have succeeded as a small tradesman in a country town, but he never would have made such a success as he did, with half a million of money at his back, good credit and a hand in the European treacle-pot.

He was twenty-two when he succeeded to the banking business, and he was forty-four at the date of this story. Twenty years, and he had done a great deal in twenty years. He had made himself a name in finance, not so great as the name of Rothschild or Schwab, but equally as great as Hirsch.

He had a house in the Avenue Malakoff, in Paris, as well as his house in London. Paris and London were the two foci of his business orbit.

It is impossible for an ordinary person to estimate the power and influence that lie in the hands of a man like Sir Anthony Gyde; millions do not, of a necessity, confer power upon their possessor, except the power of spending; but a man of genius, with seven million in cash and credit at his elbow, can command events.

Of the private life of this banker-millionaire, the least said the better. He was a patron of Art, he was many things besides. As a man of the world, that is to say, a man capable of fighting the world, he was all but flawless.

He had one weak point, his temper. He rarely lost his temper, but when he did, he quite lost control of himself; and a demon, carefully hidden at all other times, arose and spoke and acted.

A terrible and familiar spirit.

When under its influence the man was appalling.

CHAPTER V

STANDING on Gamblesby Fell you can see Throstle Hall away to the right, its gables and the smoke of its chimneys above the tall elm trees, and the great sweep of park surrounding it.

Gazing straight before one the eye travels over pasture-land and corn-field, farm and village, to the far dim valley of the Eden beyond, and far beyond the hills of Cumberland stand like the ramparts of a world dominated by the Saddle Back.

Carlisle to the right, twenty miles away, shows a tracery of smoke against the sky.

The pasture-land and the corn-fields come right up to the fell foot, where they cease suddenly, as though a line had been drawn between civilization and desolation.

The whole sky-line of the fells is unbroken by a tree; here and there, on the fell sides, you may come across a clump of stunted firs, a spread of bushes, a larch or two, but on the

upper land nothing may grow but the short fell grass, and here and there, in the shelter of a hollow, a few whortle bushes. The reason of this desolation is the helm wind.

The helm wind has never been explained. Of nights in Blencarn, or Skirwith, or any of the villages in the plain below, the villagers, waking from their sleep, hear a roar like the roar of an express train. It is the helm wind.

Next morning the trees are in torment; in the plain below a high gale is blowing, and, looking up at the fells, you see above them, ruled upon the sky, a bar of cloud. It is the helm bar, under it the wind comes rushing. When it is high, nothing can withstand its force on the fell top; it will blow a farm cart away like a feather; the horned and black-faced fell sheep lie down before it.

One afternoon in early spring a man on a big black horse came riding through the little village of Blencarn.

He was a middle-sized man, dark, with a Vandyke beard; he wore glasses, and he rode as though half the countryside belonged to him, which, in fact, it did.

A farmer, leaning over his gate, touched his hat to the passer-by, watched him turn a corner, and then, turning, called out to a man working in a field beyond.

"Bill!"

"Ay."

"Gyde's back."

"I seed'n."

That was all, but the tones of the men's voices spoke volumes.

Twice a year or so, once for the shooting in the autumn, and again in spring, as a rule, Sir Anthony Gyde came down to Throstle Hall, bringing with him his French valet, his cook, and in the autumn half a dozen friends.

He was a good landlord, and open-handed enough, but he had never gained the esteem of the country folks; they touched their hats to him, but they called him a stracklin.*

Certain incidents of his youth lingered in their memory. In the country the past dies slowly; if you leave a reputation there to-day you will find it there ten years hence, not much the worse for the wear.

Leaving Blencarn, Sir Anthony struck over

* A bad 'un.

the lower fells; he did not trouble about roads or gates; when he met with a wall of loose stones he put his horse at it, and the horse, an Irish hunter, tipped it with his fore hoofs and passed over.

On Gamblesby Fell he drew rein. It was a still grey day; there was scarcely a sound on the breeze; one could hear the call of a shepherd, the bark of his dog, and, far away, the drumming sound of driven sheep.

The master of millions sat with the reins hanging loose upon his horse's neck, gazing at the scene before him. Then, touching his horse with the spur, he resumed his way, making towards the plain and home.

He had only come down from London the day before, and he intended returning on the morrow; he had spent the day in going over the estate, and he intended passing the evening in consultation with his land agent, Gristlethwaite.

Two miles from home he took a short cut, and struck across the fields into a very strange and desolate place.

Here, in a large meadow, stands Long Meg, and here recline her daughters.

They are a weird group, even by daylight,

more so just now, for the dusk was beginning to fall.

Long Meg is just a huge stone, standing erect and lonely, the relic of some forgotten religion; her daughters, sixty or more, lie before her in a circle. They are boulders, seen by daylight; but in the dusk, they are anything your fancy wills. Hooded women, for choice, in all positions; some crouched as if in prayer, some recumbent, some erect. He was passing these things, which he had known from his childhood, when, amidst them, and almost like one of them, he perceived a form seated on a camp stool.

It was the form of a man wearing a broad-brimmed hat.

Now, what presentiment or curiosity stirred the mind of Sir Anthony Gyde will never be known, but on perceiving this figure he reined in, then turned his horse and rode towards it.

The man had been sketching, evidently, for a small easel stood before him, but he seemed to have forgotten his work, forgotten the dusk that had overtaken him, forgotten everything, in some reverie into which he had fallen.

He must have heard the horse's hoofs approaching, but he did not turn.

"You are sketching the stones?" said Sir Anthony, drawing rein a few feet away.

The man on the camp stool turned and looked from under the brim of his hat at the man on the horse.

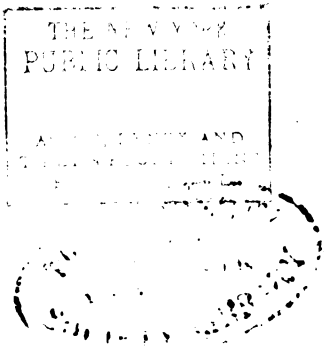
There was just enough light to see his face.

It was a face that no man or woman would ever forget, once having seen.

It was not ugly, but it was thin, cadaverous, and under the shadow of the hat brim, in some mysterious way dreadful. Now Sir Anthony Gyde was a man who feared neither ghost nor devil, but when his eyes met the eyes of this man his face fell away, and he sat in his saddle like a man who has suddenly been stricken by age.

He sat for a moment like this, then, wheeling his horse, he put spurs to it and fled, as a man flies for his life.

It Was a Face That No Man or Woman Would Ever Forget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CHAPTER VI

HE struck into the high road.

A frost had set in with the evening, the road was like metal, and the sound of the horse's hoofs rang upon the air like the sound of a trip-hammer on anvil.

A detour of several miles brought him to the main avenue gate of the Hall.

A groom was waiting at the steps of the house; he took the horse, which was lathered with foam, and the horseman, without a word, went up the steps.

He entered a large galleried hall, hung with armour and trophies of the chase; a great fire blazed cheerily on the immense hearth, and the soft electric light fell upon the Siberian bear-skins, and lit with the light of another age the quaint figures of the dark oak carvings that were there when Charles was King.

Sir Anthony Gyde passed across the hall, opened a door, and entered the library.

He paced up and down. To-morrow evening

at this hour he was due to meet Spain in the person of her Ambassador, and to discuss a loan that had been entrusted to his hands.

But he was not thinking of Spain. For the moment the affairs of the world were nothing to him.

For the moment his mind was driven into communication with his soul.

As he walked up and down, now with his hands in his pockets, now with his arms crossed, his face wore that expression which a face wears when its owner finds himself face to face with his fate.

The most terrible experience in life is to meet the past, and to find that it is still living.

What a helpless, vague, futile country seems the past; just a picture, a voice, a dream. Yet what demons live there, active and in being.

Men fear the future, but it is in the past that danger lies. At any moment one of those old vague pictures that lie beyond yesterday may become animated, and the woman we betrayed in the rose garden, or the brother of the man we killed in the desert, may enter our lives through some unseen door.

Gyde, having paced the room for some ten

minutes, rang a bell by the mantel and ordered the servant who answered it to summon Gristlethwaite, the land-agent.

He was a short, thick-set man, Cumbrian by birth, but with not a trace of the accent.

Sir Anthony bade him be seated, ordered in cigars and whisky, and plunged into business.

He was once more the level-headed business man, the man who could take in the whole details of the management of a big estate in a few hours, pick holes in it, point out errors, and show as deep a knowledge of detail as though he lived there all the year round.

It was past dinner-time, but he apparently forgot the fact.

After several hours' conversation and inspection of accounts, Sir Anthony, who was standing with his back to the mantelpiece, suddenly, in the middle of a confabulation about drainage, turned the conversation.

"By the way," he said, "have you seen an artist fellow about here, man in a broad-brimmed hat——"

"If he's the man you mean," replied the agent, "I believe it's a man with a German

name, Klein, an artist. I let him have Skirle Cottage a month ago."

"Klein," said the other, in a meditative tone.

"He took it for three months," went on Gristlethwaite. "Paid in advance. He brought some sticks of furniture from Penrith; he's an ill-looking chap, but his money is good; half-cracked I should think, coming here this time of year."

"He didn't give you any references?"

"No, he paid in advance; I was in two minds about letting him have the place, but since old Lewthwaite's death it has been lying idle and going to pieces."

"Did you have any conversation with him?"

"Yes, sir," said Gristlethwaite, "and his talk struck me as a bit daft. I cannot remember all he said, but I remember he told me he had lived in Paris and had seen you there."

"What else did he say, try and think. I saw the fellow this evening sketching the stones, and I don't like the look of him; one never knows in these days what burglars are about."

"Oh, I don't think he's anything of that sort," replied the other, "and I can't very well

remember the words he said, except that he was reckoned a great artist and that he had come down here to complete his masterpiece."

Sir Anthony made that movement of the shoulders of a person, who, to use a vulgar expression, feels a goose walking upon his grave.

"Well," he said. "I suppose he has taken the cottage, and we can't turn him out." Then he went on conversing about the drainage, at the exact point where he had left off, as though Klein, the cottage, and the masterpiece were things of no account.

At ten Gristlethwaite departed.

CHAPTER VII

THE next morning's post brought some fifty or so letters to Throstle Hall, forwarded on from London.

Letters from Russia, letters from Japan, letters from Paris, Constantinople and Madrid; bills, circulars, lottery announcements, touting letters, begging letters, letters from lunatics, financiers, friends, politicians and enemies.

It was a post the receipt of which would have driven an ordinary man to distraction, but it did not distract Sir Anthony Gyde.

He reviewed them sitting up in bed, propped up with pillows, a cup of tea by his side and his correspondence spread upon the coverlet.

He sorted them by the simple process of casting them upon the floor, some on the right, some on the left. The ones on the right went to the waste-paper basket, the ones on the left to his secretary. He had nearly finished, when he came upon an envelope, thin and narrow,

poverty-stricken, stamped in the left-hand corner as if in defiance of convention and addressed in a handwriting unique, in that it managed to be both prim and fantastic.

There are letters, men, streets, and numerous other things in this life that produce upon the mind of the person who sees them for the first time an impression to be summed up in the one word—Bad.

The letter in Sir Anthony's hand would have struck you or me, most probably, with an unfavourable impression, but it did not seem to affect him; he was used to all sorts of impressions.

When you possess a fortune to be reckoned in millions, derived from possessions all over the world, you must accommodate your temper to the receipt of more things than rents and felicitations. Gyde, for instance, was accustomed to receive at least one letter in the course of every month, threatening either his life or his reputation; so accustomed, indeed, that he looked forward perhaps with interest to their receipt.

He opened the murderous and mean-looking letter in his hand, and came upon neither skull

nor cross-bones, nor coffin, nor threat, but simply:

"Skirle Cottage,
"Blencarn Fell,

"I will be at home this afternoon at three o'clock. I must see you, without fail, at that hour.

"MÜLLER."

Leloir, the valet, was in the bath-room stropping a razor, when he heard a stifled cry from the bedroom adjoining; running in, he found his master standing on the floor, holding the bedpost with one hand, whilst with the other he held the letter we have just read.

His face was of that peculiar grey we associate with damp walls, mildew, ruin. He was shaking in every member, and the bed shook, as if the terror of the man, or his rage, had diffused itself even into the inanimate.

Leloir withdrew; he had too intimate a knowledge of his master to intrude upon him when he was in one of his takings.

I have said that when Gyde lost himself in one of his attacks of anger, a devil stepped forth and was seen. Speaking less hyperboli-

cally, the man became a ravening beast, and he would as soon have struck Leloir to the ground, or any one else, indeed, when in one of these attacks, as not.

Now, left to himself, with nothing to vent his anger upon, the attack left him without an explosion, the shaking of the bed ceased, he called his man to him, ordered his bath to be prepared, and whilst this was being done, he examined the envelope in which the letter had arrived.

It bore the postmark "Skirwith," and in the corner was written the word "Local."

It had evidently been posted at the village of Skirwith some time on the day before, though the office stamp was half obliterated and quite useless as an indication of the date.

Having examined the envelope carefully, he replaced the letter in it and laid it on the mantelpiece, bathed, dressed, put the letter in his pocket, and then sent for his secretary to the library, where he began dictating letters in answer to the important ones he had received that morning.

But he dictated no reply to the humble-looking epistle post-marked Skirwith.

At half-past one he had luncheon.

Shortly after luncheon he ordered his motor-car to be got ready to take him to the railway station at Carlisle, in time to catch the express to London at five; also a second car to take his secretary, dispatch boxes and odds and ends. The French cook was not given the dignity of a car. The cook, who was a personage in his way, would be driven to Little Salkeld station in the dogcart, and find his way to Carlisle by train. Leloir would go with his master.

It was like the mobilization of a small army every time Sir Anthony Gyde chose to change his residence, even for a few days.

At half-past two a small Arol-Johnston car, used for short distances, was brought to the door.

Sir Anthony got into it, having given Leloir strict injunctions as to the luggage, etc. He told the man that he was about to visit an outlying farm on the estate, and that he would be back in time for the motor to take him to the train. Then he started.

He was his own chauffeur.

CHAPTER VIII

SKIRLE Cottage lies tucked away in a hollow of Blencarn Fell.

The fells, as I have before indicated, are one great sweep of low hills facing the west; they are continuous and almost unbroken, yet by the local custom they are divided into sections, each with a name of its own.

Blencarn Fell, so called, perhaps, from the village of Blencarn at its foot, is as wild and, perhaps, in summer, as lovely as any other part of the Pennine Range.

Skirle Cottage, lying in a depression of it, was as far removed from human eye as it is possible for a house to be.

It was a fairly large cottage, a barn was attached to it in the Cumberland fashion, so that the whole building was of one piece.

The hollow in which it lay was, of a summer afternoon, perfumed with the smell of those wild flowers that grow in Cumberland as they grow nowhere else, and filled with the murmur

of bees. At dusk of a summer's evening it was a veritable cup of twilight and silence.

Even in summer, when the sky was blue above, when the wild strawberries were in their glory and the hills were hazy with heat, there was something strangely melancholy about this tiny valley, with the little cottage nestling in its heart.

There were days in the long winter of Cumberland when the valley and the cottage, seen from above, presented a picture dreary to the point of being tragic.

The high road, at the foot of the fells, was scarcely a quarter of a mile away, yet the cottage was quite invisible from it.

The Arol-Johnston car, with its single occupant, drew up on the road level with the unseen cottage. Sir Anthony Gyde descended, and leaving the car to take care of itself, opened the gate, passed through, and struck up the rising ground.

There was not a breath of wind, the air was keen with frost, there was not a living thing in sight, save in the sky, far up, under the cold grey clouds, a hawk poised, now moving with a flutter of the wings, now motionless as a stone.

One might stand here seemingly unseen; it would have appeared that one might commit any act, unseen by eye, save the eye of God. Yet far up the fell, so small a figure as to be unnoticeable, a boy, Robert Lewthwaite, son of a shoe-maker in Blencarn, attracted by the hum of the approaching car on the high road far below, was watching.

From that elevation he could see the car approaching; he saw it stop and the occupant get out. He recognized him at once as Sir Anthony Gyde. He saw him cross the field and enter the little valley.

Here Sir Anthony looked around him, sweeping the fell face as though to see if he were observed. Apparently satisfied, he knocked at the cottage door; the door was opened for him, he entered, and the door was closed.

All this vastly interested the boy. Klein, the German artist, had greatly exercised the local mind. A man whose face and personality would have drawn attention in a city, excited the deepest interest among these primitive folk.

Primitive, perhaps, but full of imagination, and more than ordinarily speculative.

He, too, like Sir Anthony Gyde, had been

labelled a stracklin; besides being a stracklin he was "vaugh."

No boy in the village would have approached Skirle Cottage after dark. There was something about its occupant that fascinated them, but it was a fascination composed three-parts of fear.

He cooked his own food, and though the food he cooked was the food he bought from the village shop and the surrounding farms, there were sinister suspicions in the minds of the young people in the neighbourhood that he cooked and ate other things besides eggs and bacon and fell mutton.

An old woman of the village, Mrs. Braithwaite, called every day at noon to clean up the place and make the bed (Klein was a late riser, another suspicious point about him), and her tales about the artist and his doings did not detract from the villagers' preconceived impressions.

She declared, at times, that he was enough to "mak' t' flesh creep up yan's back to think on," but he paid her five shillings a week, and as money was scarce in the Braithwaite household, and the work to be done at Skirle Cottage oc-

cupied only half an hour or so a day, she kept on with the job.

There was, besides the money, a sort of eerie fascination about the stranger that was not entirely distasteful to the old lady's heart.

Once, a small boy named Britten, greatly daring, had peeped through the window at the ogre. The door opened and the ogre came out, and Britten ran, returning home drenched, and with the following lucid description of the incident and the cause of his wetting. "He chased me an' I rin, ah catcht mi teea ower a cobble and down ah went, end-ower-end inta the beck." So it was not surprising that Bob Lewthwaite, seeing Sir Anthony Gyde goin into the ogre's cottage and the door closing upon him, waited, forgetting everything else in the world, to see what was going to happen.

He waited a long time, nearly three-quarters of an hour, then the door opened and Sir Anthony Gyde came out.

He was carrying a black bag in his hand.

He closed the door and looked around him, just as he had done before entering. Satisfied, apparently, that he was unobserved, he came down the valley towards the road, got into the motor-car and drove off.

CHAPTER IX

SIR ANTHONY GYDE was a fearless horseman, but a somewhat timid motorist, as motorists go.

He drove carefully, rarely exceeding fifteen miles an hour.

To-day, however, he cast his timidity aside.

He was lucky to-day, for on these roads of Cumberland it is nothing to meet with a flock of five hundred sheep or so, or a string of farm carts, each drawn by a horse terrified of motor-cars, as most of the farm horses of Cumberland still are.

It was ten minutes to four when he reached Throstle Hall.

The Edinburgh express for London stops at Carlisle at five, so he had plenty of time in which to catch it.

He descended from the car in a leisurely manner, with the black bag in his hand, and entered the house. He crossed the hall and entered the library, remained there for a minute

or so, and then came out and went into the dining-room. One could tell, by the man's footsteps, that he was full of unrest. He went upstairs and entered the rooms on the first floor. Here he met his secretary, Mr. Folgam, but he did not speak a word.

In one of the corridors he met Leloir.

"The luggage has all been dispatched, sir," said Leloir, "and the car is waiting. When would you like to start?"

"Start," said Sir Anthony, speaking like a person awakened from a dream, "for where?"

"You ordered the car to take you to Carlisle, sir," said the astonished Leloir, "to catch the London express at five. I telegraphed this morning for a special saloon carriage to be attached."

"Ah, so I did," said Sir Anthony, "so I did." He chuckled, as if at some obscure joke, known to him alone.

It was dusk in the corridor, and Leloir could not see his master's face distinctly, or the expression on it, but he heard the chuckle. He had been in Gyde's service for two years, and he thought that he knew every phase of his master's temperament and character, but this

chuckle alarmed him more than the wildest outbreak of rage would have done.

There was something inhuman in it, something horrible. It did not seem the sound produced by a man's voice; a great ape might have uttered it or a devil.

Leloir was turning to go, in fact, he had made half a dozen steps, when Gyde's voice said:

"Stop."

"Sir?" replied the valet.

"You have all my jewels?"

"Yes, sir, they are in this bag."

"Right. Order the car to the door."

The valet, glad to be gone, did as he was bid, and the master of Throstle Hall continued his peregrinations about the house, as though to make sure that everything was right before leaving.

A few minutes later he came downstairs, still carrying the bag. The motor, a large brougham affair, was standing at the steps; he got in, Leloir closed the door, mounted beside the chauffeur, and they started.

Ten minutes before the express was due they arrived at Carlisle station.

"Tell me when the train arrives," said Gyde

through the speaking tube to his valet. "I am busy and don't want to be disturbed."

He sat reading over some papers he had taken from his pocket, whilst Leloir busied himself, seeing that what luggage they had with them was prepared for the train.

When it arrived Sir Anthony, leaving the motor, walked hurriedly down the platform to the special saloon carriage that had been attached for him, took his seat, and ordered his man to let nobody disturb him.

It was dusk when the great two-engined express drew out of Carlisle station and took its way to London.

CHAPTER X

TWICE during the journey to London Leloir entered the compartment where Sir Anthony was, once bringing him tea, and again, just after leaving Normanton, bringing him the evening papers.

One of the dining-car attendants, who was a friend of Leloir's, afterwards deposed that there was something very strange about the man's manner.

"He looked startled and white," ran his deposition, "looked like a man who had seen a ghost. I've known him a year, met him first on the run to Carlisle, then I met him in town by appointment and we went to a music hall together. He was always a good companion, and spent his money freely, but when he came into the car-kitchen for his master's tea he had no sense in him; I asked him how his master was, he took me by the buttonhole and he says, 'Parsons, do you believe in the supernatural?'

"'No,' I says, 'I don't. What makes you ask me?'

"'Because,' he says, and then he stopped, for the head attendant was calling to me.

"I'd give a dollar," concluded Mr. Parsons, "to know what he did mean, and I'd bet a dollar it was something queer."

At St. Pancras two broughams were waiting, Gyde got into the first, Leloir got on the box, and they drove off; the secretary and the dispatch boxes followed in the second brougham.

It was half-past eleven when they arrived at 110B Piccadilly.

Sir Anthony went to his own room, followed by his valet; the secretary went to his own room and to bed, as did Raymond, the butler, who was a man who kept early hours.

At midnight the house was as silent as the tomb.

Now, Mr. Folgam's apartments were on the same floor as Sir Anthony's bedroom, and he was lying in bed reading *The Count of Monte Cristo,* when, very shortly after midnight, he heard a cry.

It was exactly like the howl of a dog. It was

not like the sound a human being would emit, he afterwards deposed; and in this Mr. Folgam, who was not a student of inarticulate sounds, was wholly wrong; for it was exactly like the cry of a man in the extremity of terror or mental agony. A sound which, fortunately, very few of us have ever heard.

But it was in the house, he was sure of that, and getting out of bed he came down the corridor towards Sir Anthony's room.

The electric lamps were shut off in the corridor, but the place was dimly illuminated by the flood of light streaming through the secretary's bedroom door.

He had reached the door of Sir Anthony's room, when it was opened, and Sir Anthony himself, fully dressed and carrying a black bag in his hand, appeared.

On seeing Folgam he started, like a person who has received a shock.

"I thought I heard a cry," said Folgam. "I thought some one might be ill, sir——"

"Ah!" said the other, "I heard nothing. Go to your room and tell them in the morning not to awaken me till ten. I shall be at work till late."

Folgam apologized for his mistake and withdrew, and Sir Anthony, retiring into his room, shut the door.

Ten minutes later, had any one been watching, they would have perceived Gyde, bag in hand, passing down the corridor.

He was holding one of those small electric lamps that light on pressure of a button. He came down the broad staircase, making as little sound as a cat.

He unbarred and unchained the front door, and if the bars and chains had been covered with velvet he could not have made less noise.

Closing the door behind him, he stood upon the steps.

A late hansom was passing; he hailed it, gave an address to the cabman, and drove away.

The clocks chimed the hours away, and the night-prowler and the policeman passed the house in Piccadilly, the house with the great marble pillars on either side the door, which every habitué of the West End knew to be the mansion of Gyde, the millionaire.

Two o'clock, three and four o'clock passed, and the dawn peeped into the bedroom of Sir

Anthony Gyde, where, on his back, upon the floor, lay the valet, Leloir, dead, without scratch or wound, his arms outspread, and upon his face an expression of horror, caught and made immutable by death.

CHAPTER XI

IT was after ten the next morning that Raymond, the butler, made the discovery. Knocking at the door of Sir Anthony's room and receiving no answer, he opened it, and found the body of the valet.

Had Raymond, instead of calling in the policeman on point duty at the corner, telephoned to New Scotland Yard, he would have found coming, as a reply, neither Inspector Dennison or Fairchild, both being away on duty. He would have found a much younger man acting as their locum tenens. A clean-shaven, almost boyish person, suggestive of a café waiter in his Sunday clothes. In other words, he would have found Gustave Freyberger, then unknown, now a European celebrity.

Freyberger, a naturalized Englishman, was exactly twenty-six years of age when the Gyde case fell into his hands like a gift from heaven and it fell into his hands at half-past ten in the morning, heralded by the ringing of the bell

of the telephone connecting Marlborough Street Police Station and New Scotland Yard.

It was half-past ten exactly when the message came through, and the Chief of the Criminal Investigation Department, who had just arrived, received it in person.

"Who's on duty?" he asked, and on being told "Freyberger," sent for him.

"Take a cab," he said, "and go at once to 110B Piccadilly—man dead there—make your report to me personally here as soon as possible."

"As soon as possible," answered Freyberger, and taking his hat and overcoat from the waiting-room, he ran swiftly down the two flights of stairs, across the hall, and into the street. There was nothing to indicate that tragedy stood behind the solid and respectable oak doors of No. 110B. They were opened by a policeman, and the detective having entered, they were immediately shut.

"You have touched nothing, altered nothing, meddled with nothing, I hope," said Freyberger, as he slipped out of his overcoat.

"Nothing," replied the man in blue. "The corpse is just where it fell when it expired."

"Who sent for you?"

"The butler."

"Call him up."

The officer of the law disappeared for a moment, and then returned, followed by Raymond. Raymond was very white and shaky, and had evidently been fortifying himself with strong waters, but he was quite capable of telling what he knew.

In a few words he told how Sir Anthony, his valet and secretary, had arrived the night before; how the household had retired to rest; how he had received instructions from the secretary, Mr. Folgam, not to allow him to be awakened till ten.

How he had searched for Leloir, without finding him, to tell him of this order; how he had gone into the bedroom to find Leloir lying dead on the floor, and Sir Anthony gone.

"Gone!" said Freyberger.

"The bed had not been slept in," replied the other.

"Before proceeding further I will go up and see the body," said the detective. Raymond led the way, and Freyberger followed him to

the fatal bedroom; bending over the body was a tall, clean-shaved man.

"Dr. Murrell," said Raymond.

The doctor rose to his full height, and exposed what he had been bending over. It was a sight that gave even Freyberger a thrill.

He introduced himself. "I can't find a trace of injury," said the police surgeon.

"What do you think he died of?"

"Fright," replied Dr. Murrell. "Most possibly he had a weak heart, we will see at the autopsy; but it was fright that killed him—look at his face."

Now Freyberger was a junior man at the Yard. He recognized at once that this case was no ordinary case of a man being found dead. The position of Gyde, his great place in the world, his absence, and the extraordinary death of his valet, conspired to make it an affair of the first importance.

A weak man might have sent for assistance, but he was not a weak man by any manner of means, and as he stood looking at the object on the floor, it seemed to him that he could hear the waters of that flood that leads on to fortune.

In a moment he had made up his mind. Leav-

ing the corpse exactly where it lay, he withdrew downstairs to the dining-room, asking the people around to accompany him.

He shut the dining-room door and began to interrogate Raymond.

"How many people slept in the house last night?"

"Sir Anthony, sir, myself, the secretary, Mr. Folgam, Leloir and the servants." Then, answering the questions of the detective, he told nearly all that we know.

As he was finishing the door opened, and Mr. Folgam came in; divining the presence of the law he introduced himself, and told of the cry he had heard and of how he had met Sir Anthony, dressed, apparently, for going out.

"In what state was the front door this morning?" asked Freyberger of Raymond.

"The chain was undone, sir, all the bolts drawn, and the door held only by the latch."

"Had Sir Anthony any valuables in the house?"

"His jewels, sir, in the big Morocco case he always carries about with him travelling; he keeps papers in it, but there are some very valuable jewels."

"Where is the case?"

"In the bedroom, sir."

"Go with the constable and fetch it for me to see."

Raymond departed, and returned with the case; it was open, at least it was unlocked.

Freyberger opened it; there were no jewels in it, nothing but papers; he gave it into the care of the constable. "How was Sir Anthony dressed when you saw him at his bedroom door?" he asked, turning to Mr. Folgam.

"Dressed for going out, even to his hat," replied the secretary. "He had a dark overcoat on; Sir Anthony nearly always dressed in dark things."

"Did he seem excited?"

"Well, I could not see his face very well, and as to his manner, no, I do not think it betrayed any excitement."

Freyberger paused a moment in thought; Gyde vanishing from the house without having slept in his bed, the vanishing of the jewels, the death of Leloir, and the scream heard by Mr. Folgam, all pointed towards the sinister.

But it was all vague. Gyde might have gone out on some business of his own at that late

hour, taking his jewels with him; the scream heard by Folgam might have been an illusion, the death of Leloir might have been accidental. Each incident in itself was not impossible, viewed by the light of natural causes, but the conjunction of the three spelt in lurid letters, crime.

There was work to be done, but it was not here.

"Who are Sir Anthony's bankers?" asked Freyberger of Raymond.

"Coutts, sir."

"Thanks, now I must be going. You will have the corpse removed to the mortuary, and —should Sir Anthony return, you had better telephone us, and we will send some one to interview him."

Freyberger left the house with the doctor.

"It's a queer case," said the police surgeon.

"Very," replied the other, hailing a passing hansom.

"I wonder what he saw before he died," went on Dr. Murrell.

"If we knew that," replied the detective, "the case might not seem so queer."

"Or queerer?"

"Perhaps."

"That man died of pure blank terror, I'll stake my reputation on it," said Dr. Murrell. "Out in Bulgaria, in the riot time, I saw a woman who had died like that. I have made my mind up to try and find out."

"What?"

"What he saw."

"How?"

"I shall photograph the retina by Mendel's process."

"Ah!" said Freyberger.

"Whatever he saw was seen by electric light, for the lamps in the bedroom were still alight when they found him. Electric light is more favourable even than sunlight for retinal pictures; he died instantaneously; the conditions could not well be more favourable."

"You are a photographer?"

"Amateur," replied the police surgeon, with a fine assumption of modesty, considering that photography, its highways and byways, was the hobby of his life.

"You will let me know if you are successful?" said the other, getting into the cab.

"I will," replied Dr. Murrell.

When Freyberger reached the Yard he had to wait for a full quarter of an hour before being admitted to the presence of his Chief.

He found the Chief of the Criminal Investigation Department seated in that half cheerful, half sinister room, which is the central bureau of an army for ever at war with crime.

The walls of this room are hung with pictures of noted criminals; over the mantel, in a glass case, are weird-looking instruments of the expert burglars' art.

In the centre of the room, at a large table covered with papers and documents, sat the chief; a young man, well dressed and groomed, with a quiet manner and a calm, cool, steadfast eye.

Freyberger, without much preliminary, plunged into the business before him, and told all we know. Occasionally the young man at the table made a note. He listened attentively, asking a question now and then.

When his subordinate had finished he said, "Is that all?"

"Yes, sir, that is all I have to say."

"Hum—well, since you went, there has been

a warrant issued for the arrest of Sir Anthony Gyde."

"A warrant," said Freyberger. "I beg your pardon, sir——"

"Issued by Sir James Coatbank, Justice of the Peace for the Division of Carlisle."

"What is the charge?" asked Freyberger.

"Murder," replied the Chief. "I have been in telephonic communication with Carlisle for the last quarter of an hour and have received all the details. He is accused of the murder of a man named Klein in a cottage on the fells, near Blencarn." He then methodically, yet quickly, began to give the details of the case, omitting nothing, yet not using an unnecessary word. What he told Freyberger here follows, but in other words.

CHAPTER XII

BOB LEWTHWAITE, the child who had watched Sir Anthony Gyde entering and leaving Skirle Cottage, was of a venturesome disposition. He feared few things except "boggles." He feared Klein a bit, but not nearly so much as the other children of the village. The fact of Sir Anthony's visit to the cottage stirred his rustic imagination, and a great inspiration came to him to do as young Britten had done, peep through the window.

He came down the fell side towards the cottage, half undecided in his mind; at the fell foot he was half inclined to give up the business, then, suddenly, he cast fear away, and crawling along by the cottage wall reached the window, raised himself on tip-toe, and peeped.

What he saw he did not quite understand at first. Then it became horribly clearer.

There was a great grey bundle on the white cottage floor; then the thing, on closer inspection, became a human body. But there was no

head. There was a pool of something dark near where the head ought to have been.

It was Klein's body; he recognized it, because of the clothes, a grey homespun suit, that all the neighbourhood knew. It was Klein, but he had no head.

Murder never occurred to the child; he only recognized the fact that the man he had seen walking about the day before had suddenly lost his head, and the horror of this fact, suddenly borne in on him, was greater than he could well bear.

He ran he knew not whither, but presently he found himself sitting under a wall, shivering and shaking and very sick.

Then he went home, but he did not tell what he had seen.

He sat in a corner of his father's cottage looking "waugh." He would take no tea, and he went to bed mum. But no sooner was he undressed and between the sheets than suddenly, as if touched off, he began to bellow.

Then it all came out helter-skelter, and the horrified cottagers listened to him as he told his gruesome tale.

There is scarcely a farm girl in Cumberland

who has not a bicycle of her own, and before the tale was well told Bob Lewthwaite's eldest sister had started to fetch the constable from Langwathby.

When he arrived, and when lamps were lit, the whole village, headed by the policeman, made for Skirle Cottage.

The constable alone entered.

On the floor lay the body of Klein, headless and fearful to behold. It was dressed in the well-known grey suit, but the clothes, for some mysterious reason, were slashed, as if with a knife. The coat was open and the waistcoat, but there were no wounds on the trunk that the constable could see.

No knife or weapon of any sort was to be seen.

The room was furnished plainly, with a deal table, kitchen chairs and an old horse-hair sofa. Neither chairs or table were overset; there was no mark at all of a struggle, nothing to hint of a tragedy enacted there, nothing, that is to say, but the headless body lying upon the floor.

The constable, a man of great intelligence, closed the door on the murmuring throng out-

side, and made a minute examination of the room.

He searched the floor carefully; there were no marks of footsteps, but in a corner lay something white; he picked it up, it was a silk handkerchief, marked with the initials, "A.G."

On the mantle, beside a tin candlestick, lay a letter, an envelope containing the envelope and letter which Sir Anthony had received that morning, and a sheet of paper on which was written:

"Paris, Feb. 8th.

"You will not escape me; neither you or the secret you carry, which is also mine. If necessary, I will follow you to the ends of the earth —and beyond,

"KLEIN."

CHAPTER XIII

"SO," said Freyberger, when this detailed description of the affair had been given to him by his Chief, "it is briefly this: Gyde was being blackmailed by this man; he called on him, murdered him, and cut off his head, put it in a bag, came to London with the bag and slipped out of his London house, carrying with him his jewels. It is an extraordinarily strange case."

"It seems clear enough."

"Not to me, sir—excuse me for saying so."

The Chief of the Criminal Investigation Department had long had his eye on Freyberger. He recognized genius in the man. He knew his temperament also, and that, if given a full rein and let speak and act as he liked, he blossomed; but, if snubbed or kept in check, he wilted, and became just an ordinary detective.

"Just explain yourself," he said. "Give me the points in your mind that strike you."

"Well, sir," said the other, "why did this

man leave those utterly damning letters behind him on the mantelpiece? "

"You know as well as I do," replied the Chief, "that in every criminal's brain there is a black spot, a vacant point that betrays him, and leads him to do some act, some extraordinarily stupid act, which in turn leads him—here."

"Quite so. Why did he cut off his victim's head—what in the name of heaven did he want to burden himself with a human head for? The man was known in the neighbourhood, his body was there to be identified; taking the head away would seem to serve no known purpose, unless he intended to keep it as a curiosity or memento."

"I confess it puzzles me," replied the other.

"On top of these two puzzling facts," went on Freyberger, "we have the death of Leloir the valet."

"He may have opened the bag and come upon the head."

"I have thought of that, but the explanation does not satisfy me, for, from the expression of his face——" Freyberger stopped.

"Yes?"

"Well, I am convinced he saw something worse than an ordinary human head."

"Remember that to open a bag and find a grizzly thing like that would give even the most stout-hearted man a shock."

Freyberger shook his head. "There was a look of wild horror on his face that was caused, by what I know not, by what I even fail to imagine, but by something, I am very sure, much worse than the sight of a human head. I can almost fancy——"

"Well?"

Freyberger gave a little laugh, as if at the idea that had struck him. "I can almost fancy a man dying with an expression on his face like that after he had seen the—unimaginable. Excuse me, I am a German by birth, and we Germans have wild thoughts sometimes. Let me be practical. With your permission I will telephone now to Coutts, they are Sir Anthony's bankers; it may be as well to see if they have any knowledge of his movements."

"Use the telephone," replied the Chief.

Freyberger went to the instrument, spoke through it, received an answer, and spoke

again. Then he listened attentively, and as he listened a faint smile stole over his face.

"He has been there at ten o'clock this morning, just as they opened, taken the box containing his late wife's jewels, given a receipt for it, and departed. He evidently determined to collect all his resources. He has done it with great coolness. No professional criminal could have done it better."

"You must remember he was a financier," said the other.

"True," replied Freyberger, "and now, if you will permit me, sir, I will go about the business of finding the cabman who drove him this morning, or last night. He is pretty certain——" He stopped, for at that moment a knock came to the door and a sergeant appeared.

"Telephone from Vine Street, sir, relative to 110B Piccadilly. A dismembered human head has been discovered."

"Ha!" said the Chief. "Any details?"

"No, sir, only the statement."

The Chief went to his private telephone and spoke through, "Messenger come with word, no details, go at once Freyberger and report."

CHAPTER XIV

FREYBERGER once told me that he often admired the fictional detective, because of the ingenuity of his maker; but that the method of Lecocq, Sherlock Holmes and Co., had a great defect if used in the pursuit of a master criminal.

"You see," said he, "that in a case like this you are not following the traces of feet, but the working of a brain. Now the common criminal may be taken by the methods of a Sherlock Holmes. The good Sherlock sees mud of a certain character on a man's boots, and concludes that the man has been to Dulwich, or is it Leatherhead? because mud of that description is found there. Our Sherlock is all eyes, nothing escapes him. He is just the sort of person I would choose to follow me if I were a criminal, for I would leave traces behind me that he would be sure to follow and that would eternally confound him. His methods would capture a bricklayer who had murdered his wife, per-

haps, but they would not capture me. I doubt if I could capture myself," said Freyberger, chuckling.

"My methods? Oh, in the ordinary cases ordinary methods, and in the extraordinary cases extraordinary ones. I think there is a lot of instinct in our work. I think a man's mind works in ways we know little of. Subconsciously, we do a lot of real thinking.

"I have also some theories which I use; one especially.

"Every crime is a story containing a hero, often a heroine, and a large or small collection of minor characters. The story ends with the completion of the crime by the criminal hero.

"When I am called in to a really intricate case, I am like a person to whom is handed the last chapter of a novel. I order myself to rewrite the romance.

"If in that chapter there are just a few subordinate characters left, it is generally enough for me; one thing leads to another till the story is complete. I search for mud on boots and stains on clothes, it is true, but I plunge, if possible, into my hero's mind and past. There lies the heart of the mystery. If there is no

hero to be found, there is a heroine. I have dragged a murderer to the graveside through the mind and past of a woman.

"I did so in the Gyde case. It is true I was helped by a man called Hellier; but that has nothing to do with my theory."

As he drove to Piccadilly he felt somewhat dissatisfied. Gyde, unable to dispose of the head of his victim, had left it behind him at the house. This showed a certain unresourcefulness in the man. Was he, after all, on the track of a common blundering assassin?

To Freyberger the chase was everything, the feeling in the dark for another mind, and the gripping of it and the mastering of it.

A foeman worthy of his metal, that was what he craved for and that was what he was about to find. When he arrived the door was opened for him by a plain clothes officer.

"Well, Jenkins," said the detective, "what have we found?"

"The head of Sir Anthony Gyde, sir, I believe," replied the officer. Freyberger was taking off his overcoat; he paused with it half off.

"The head of Sir Anthony Gyde?"

"The butler, Raymond, says he can identify

it," replied Jenkins. "It was found in a cupboard in the bedroom. I came directly from Vine Street when the message arrived. They had not disturbed it, nor have I; just left it exactly as we found it."

"That's perfectly right; come with me."

They went upstairs.

A tall, narrow cupboard in the bedroom wall stood open; on one of the shelves reposed the head of a bearded man. The skin of the face was strangely brown and withered, the upper lip was drawn up as if in some contortion of pain, exposing the teeth; one of these teeth was gold crowned.

The thing was sufficiently frightful, but Freyberger took it down and handled it as indifferently as though it had been a cabbage.

It was in this room that Leloir, on the night before, had died of terror.

What had he seen, and how much had this head to do with the sight?

Freyberger wrapped a towel round the thing, and gave it to the plain clothes officer to make a parcel of and remove to Vine Street. Then he went down to interrogate Raymond.

He was seated in the servants' parlour, white

and shaken-looking. Was he sure that the thing was the head of his master? Perfectly, only it looked brown and to have been dead a long time. He could have told it by the teeth alone.

Freyberger stood, with his eyes fixed upon the pattern of the drugget carpet, lost in thought.

The case had suddenly, and at a stroke, become complex enough to satisfy the most exigent solver of riddles. If this was the head of Sir Anthony Gyde, then the murderer of Klein had been in his turn murdered.

But Sir Anthony Gyde had been to his bankers that morning, and had signed a receipt for his wife's jewels and obtained them.

This being so, he must have been murdered in the interval.

It was now after one o'clock. He must, if this was indeed his head, have been murdered and dismembered in the course of three hours, the head conveyed to 110B Piccadilly, and placed where it was found.

Of course, this was absurd. Of one thing alone Freyberger felt sure.

If this were indeed the head of Sir Anthony, then the thing bore some relation to the death

of the valet Leloir. Whatever unthinkable tragedy, whatever inconceivable transformation, had caused the valet to die of terror, had some strong relationship to the presence of this head in the place where it had been found.

The thing must be verified. He obtained the address of Sir Anthony's dentist from the butler, and having ordered a telegram to be sent to him to call at Vine Street at his earliest convenience, he left the house.

CHAPTER XV

IT was now half-past one. He knew that the Chief would be at luncheon, so he determined to have luncheon himself before returning to the Yard.

He turned into Blanchard's in Beak Street.

During the meal he did not think once of the case.

He knew the advantage of allowing a problem to cool itself, and he had the power of detaching his mind from any business on hand and attaching it to another affair; especially when the other affair was of an edible nature.

He was a frank gourmet. When he had finished he lit a poisonous-looking green cigar and strolled down Regent Street towards his destination.

He was thinking now about the case; reviewing it, gazing at it with his mind's eye as a Jew gazes at a lustrous jewel.

The thing was as full of fire and cloud and mystery as an opal. He felt that, live as long

as he might, he would never again find himself face to face with a case so full of strange possibilities.

It was just now, walking down the crowded street, digesting his luncheon and smoking his cigar, it was just now, that he felt in himself that strange sixth sense stirring which so few men possess. The sense that allows us to see without eyes, hear without ears and feel without hands. The sense which allows us to say to a man whom we have not seen for years, and whom we meet at a street corner: "It is strange, I was thinking of you to-day, and, somehow, I expected to meet you."

Freyberger, just now, was beginning to feel that, somewhere, lost in the darkness of the world, there existed a mind antagonistic to his own, an appalling mind, a mind of giant stature and dwarf-like subtlety and crookedness.

He had not yet come to grips with it, but he felt it to be there, as one man feels the presence of another in a darkened room. When he arrived at the Yard, he found a new development. A cabman had been found who had driven Sir Anthony Gyde on the night before. The Chief

was still absent, so Freyberger took it upon himself to interrogate the man.

He had picked Sir Anthony up in Piccadilly at twelve-thirty on the night before and driven him to Howland Street. Was he sure it was Sir Anthony? Certain. He had driven him before. Nearly every cabman, accustomed to the West End, knew him.

His cab had been coming along slowly by the kerb when he saw Sir Anthony come out of No. 110B. The baronet walked a few paces, stopped, looked around, saw the cab and hailed it.

He ordered himself to be driven to Howland Street, gave no number, stopped the cab towards the middle of the street and paid his fare with a five-shilling piece, asking for no change.

He then walked down the street, and, opening a house door with a latchkey, entered and closed the door behind him.

"Could you identify the house again?" asked Freyberger.

The man believed he could. It was a dingy house beside one that had been new painted.

"How was Sir Anthony dressed?" asked the detective.

"All in dark clothes, wearing a tall hat and carrying a black bag in his hand."

"That will do," replied Freyberger. "Is your cab outside?"

"It is, sir."

"Come on then, you can take me to Howland Street, and if you can identify the house I will give you something over your fare."

The cabman followed the detective to the street, where his cab was waiting.

Freyberger got in, the man got on the box, and they drove off.

That a millionaire of Gyde's somewhat dubious moral character should have a second house in London, the address of which was not printed on his visiting cards, was not at all an out-of-the-way fact. Yet one might have thought he would have chosen a more cheerful neighbourhood than Howland Street.

About the middle of the thoroughfare the cab drew up.

"That is the place, sir," said the man, pointing to a gaunt, grimy-looking house standing by one that had been new painted. "That is the house, if I'm not very much mistaken."

"Wait for me," said Freyberger. He knocked at the door.

The door, the knocker, the bell-pulls, all were in the last stage of neglect, an old rug hung over the area railings and a milk can stood on the step.

The door opened after he had knocked several times and rung twice.

"Are you the landlady?" asked Freyberger of the unwashed and wilted-looking woman who obeyed the summons.

"I am."

"May I come in and speak to you for a moment?"

"No, you don't," said the woman. "If you're after Mr. Tidmus he's gone away, and won't be back, goodness knows when. What's your business?"

"I'm after no one especially. I wish to ask you a question which you will be pleased to answer me, for I am a detective from Scotland Yard, Inspector Freyberger. A gentleman called here last night some time between half-past twelve and one; he let himself in with a latchkey. He was a bearded man, wearing a

tall hat and carrying a bag. What do you know about him?"

"Well, to be sure," said the woman, in an interested voice. "And what's been doing?"

"I think we had better come in and I will explain things, thank you——" She let him enter, closed the door and led him into a dingy parlour. "What he has been doing is neither here nor there. I want to know about him. Does he live here?"

"No," replied the landlady. "If he's the man you mean he came here with a letter from Mr. Kolbecker asking me to let him use Mr. Kolbecker's room for the night."

"Ah!"

"Somewhere about ten to one it was. I'd been sitting up waiting for Mr. Giles. He plays the trombone at the Gaiety and mostly comes home late and not to be trusted with candles.

"I hears a latchkey fumbling and I comes into the passage, and there was a gentleman such as you name.

"He says, 'Mrs. Stevens?' and I says, 'That's my name, and who are you?' He says, 'Mr. Kolbecker has lent me his latchkey and allows me the use of his room at night.' I

says, ' Oh! ' ' Yes,' says he, ' and here's a letter from him.' He hands me a letter; it was from Mr. Kolbecker, and it said to let the bearer use his room for the night as he was a friend. ' All right,' I says, ' the sheets are aired; and what might your name be?' He laughed when I said that; leastways, it wasn't so much a laugh, it was more liker the noise a hen makes clucking, only not so loud. 'Anthony,' he says. ' Anthony what?' I asks him. ' Mr. John Anthony, that's my name,' he answers me, and I shows him up. He went at eight this morning and give the servant girl a shilling."

" Have you the letter he brought?"

" No; he kept it."

" How long has Mr. Kolbecker been here?"

" Some six months, off and on, but for the last six weeks he has been up in Cumberland."

" Ah! " said Freyberger, "in Cumberland! What is he, this Mr. Kolbecker?"

" He's an artist."

" An artist?"

" Oh, he's all right. He pays his way regular. Keeps on his room and sends me the money for it every fortnit regular."

" Have you any of his letters?"

"I b'lieve I've got the last." She went to a drawer and hunted amidst some odds and ends.

"Here it is; no, 'tis only the envelope."

"Give me the envelope," said Freyberger. It was a narrow, shabby-looking envelope, addressed in a curious-looking handwriting. It was post-marked "Skirwith," "Carlisle" and "London, W. C."

"This is Mr. Kolbecker's handwriting?" asked the detective.

"It is."

"I must keep this envelope, please."

"No, you don't," replied the landlady, suddenly waxing wroth. "Here, you gimme that envelope back; you comes in and asks me questions which I answer about my lodgers. You say you're from Scotland Yard. How'm I to know? Gimme that back."

Freyberger put the envelope in his pocket.

"If you want my credentials," he said, "call in a constable; every man in this division knows me. Now listen. Mr. Kolbecker left you six weeks ago and went to Cumberland?"

"Yes."

"You have not seen him since?"

"No."

"Well, from information in our hands, Mr. Kolbecker went to live in Cumberland, took a cottage there under the name of Klein; he was murdered yesterday evening in a cottage on Blencarn Fell."

"Murdered!" said the woman, staring open-mouthed at the detective.

"Yes, murdered, and the man who called here last night and slept in his room was, we believe, the man who murdered him."

"Well, to be sure!" said the woman, sitting down on a chair, placing her hands upon her knees and staring at Freyberger.

She was restrained in her exclamation of astonishment because her vocabulary was limited, but her wonder was deep; it was also tinged with a not unpleasant feeling of excitement. Regret, perhaps, she had none.

Freyberger, in giving her the information, had departed from the ordinary rule of his trade, to say nothing.

It is rarely that you find a detective speaking of any point in the case he is investigating, except the point immediately at issue.

But Freyberger's object just now was to in-

spect Kolbecker's room; he had no search warrant, time was precious. He wanted to make this Gyde case his own, and the quickest way to obtain access to the place desired was by bringing the woman in line with himself and not into opposition.

"So, you see," he went on, "I have come here for no idle purpose or to waste your time; you will be called, no doubt, as a witness. I want to see this Mr. Kolbecker's room. Of course, without a search warrant, I have no legal right to enter it; but it will take me some hours to obtain one, and that will mean the loss of precious time. You wish to assist the course of justice, I am sure."

"Oh," said the woman, "you may see his room, and welcome, if that is all; but there's nothing much to see, for he took all his things with him when he went to Cumberland."

"Well," said the other, pleasantly, "we will go up and see what is to be seen—if you will lead the way."

The landlady led the way up three flights of stairs, Freyberger noting everything as he followed.

He knew the house, though he had never been in it before; knew it, that is to say, by its species. It was a lower, middle-class lodging house of the Bohemian type, a place infested by broken-down or unfledged artists, second-rate musicians, young foreigners of more or less talent living on ten shillings a week and hope; a place where anything might occur, in an artistic-Bohemian way, from a suicide to the construction of an oratorio.

The woman opened the door of the top floor front.

"This is the room," she said. It was very bare; a bed stood in one corner, and a chest of drawers, with a looking-glass on top of it, in the window.

A table stood in the middle, covered with an old red cloth.

There were two cane-bottomed chairs, and on the carpetless floor in the corner, diagonally opposite to the bed, an old horse-skin-covered trunk.

Over the mantelpiece hung a cheap oleograph.

Freyberger stood in the doorway before entering. He seemed trying to catch, so to speak,

the expression of the room; to surprise it suddenly out of some secret.

But there was nothing at all to tell of the personality of the individual who had last occupied it.

Everything was in order.

In a room just like this, some months ago, two chairs drawn close together at a table, a hairpin lying on the floor between them, and the envelope of a letter stuck in the support of the looking-glass to keep it straight, had given him a clue that had brought a forger and his mistress to justice.

But there was nothing here of any description to build a clue upon.

He inspected the floor narrowly, then the grate; then he lifted the lid of the trunk, it was empty.

The two top drawers of the chest of drawers in the window were empty; but the large middle drawer was heavy, and difficult to pull out.

It was nearly filled with large pieces of marble.

Freyberger whistled.

"Mr. Kolbecker said that wasn't to be touched on no account," said the woman.

"It's an old marble thing he broke up 'fore he went into the country."

Freyberger did not reply. He was examining the pieces of marble attentively.

They were not simply rough lumps of marble; each was rough in part, and partly smooth, and he had not been examining them for more than half a minute when he discovered the fact that they were portions of a bust broken to pieces by Kolbecker, for some reason or other, before he made his mysterious journey to Cumberland under the name of Klein.

He drew the drawer bodily out of the chest of drawers, placed it on the bed and sat down beside it.

Yes, without doubt, these broken up pieces of marble once constituted the bust of a man. Here was part of the nose with the nostrils delicately chiselled, here the chin, here a piece of the forehead.

Freyberger, dropping back into the drawer the pieces he had taken out, fell for a moment into a reverie.

Kolbecker, the man whom Gyde had murdered, had suddenly assumed large proportions in his intuitive brain.

What was the mystery surrounding this man?

He had gone to Cumberland to blackmail Gyde, assuming the name of Klein; that was perfectly understandable. But why, in the name of common sense, had he left his blackmailing letters behind him?

Gyde, driven to desperation, had murdered him. That, too, was understandable, but why the mutilation?

How was it that he had so conveniently given Gyde the letter of introduction to his landlady, thus giving his murderer a burrow to hide in for the night?

Lastly, why, before leaving for Cumberland, had he smashed the bust to pieces?

All these queries suddenly had caused in the brain of Freyberger a new and absorbing interest.

Kolbecker, this mysterious artist, now was the object of his undivided attention.

In the past of Kolbecker, he felt, lay the solution of the mystery.

This bust had been destroyed for some powerful motive.

To find out the motive it would be necessary

to reconstruct the bust and find out whom it represented, if possible, or what it represented.

To put the thing together again would be an extraordinarily difficult piece of work. One man alone could do it, and Freyberger knew that man.

In the ordinary course of events this drawerful of marble fragments would be taken to the Yard and there placed with the other material evidence. But this involved loss of time. Freyberger felt, with a strange assurity, that in the thing lay a clue that might cast a strong light on the case.

To take it direct to the Yard would mean loss of time.

He determined on his own responsibility to take it to the man he knew direct.

"I wish to take this drawer and its contents with me," he said to the woman who stood looking on. "I am quite prepared to give you a receipt for it and, what is more, I will place in your hands the value of the piece of furniture I have taken it from."

"Well," said the woman, "I suppose I can't stop you, seeing what's happened. I ain't of the having sort, but that chest of drawers cost

me a sovereign—*item,* eleven shillings in the Tottenham Court Road—and without the drawer it ain't worth tuppence."

Freyberger took out his pocket-book, wrote a receipt, and placed it, with a sovereign and a five-shilling piece, in her hand.

"There's a sovereign," he said, "and the five shillings is for a sheet to wrap the thing up in. I'll take a sheet off the bed, if you'll let me; get me some string, too, as much as you have got in the house."

She fetched the string, and between them they did the thing up securely, then carrying it in his arms as tenderly as if it were a baby, he left the house, got into the cab, and gave the man an address in Old Compton Street, Soho.

CHAPTER XVI

THE cab drew up at the address in Old Compton Street given by Freyberger to the driver. It was a small shop, filled with antiques, old china, statuettes, renovated pictures.

Here the art of Japan drew a sword or flirted a fan at you; the Middle Ages spoke through the mouthpiece of a battle-dented morion.

Behind the counter, in the midst of his treasures, mostly spurious, sat the owner of the shop, I. Antonides, smoking a cigarette and apparently lost in reverie.

An old man, a very old man, was Antonides. A Greek of the modern Greeks, with the head of a prophet and the hand of a money changer.

Behind that parchment-coloured forehead lay a knowledge of ancient and modern art—profound almost as the subject itself.

Beauty of craftsmanship appealed to Antonides. He worshipped the Venus of Milo, not for the divine beauty of her form, but for the

cunning of the hand that wrought her. A rose had no power to move his soul, but a goblin by Calot, were it in the best style of that master, made him cry out with pleasure.

He worshipped art for the sake of art, and he worshipped money for the sake of money.

His fortune was reputed to be half a million, and he lived on a pound a week.

He was very frank, with that frankness which sometimes veils the deepest and most profound deceit; he had no loves or hates, no heart, no wife, no children or relations. Only his money and his profound knowledge of men and art.

There were many curiosities for sale in the shop of Antonides, but the most curious of them all was Antonides, also on sale—at a price.

He nodded to Freyberger.

"I want you to do a little job for me, Mr. Antonides."

"What is the little job, Mr. Freyberger?"

"Oh, it's simple enough to you, impossible to any one else."

"Ah!"

"I want you to restore a broken—what shall I say—well, I believe it is a marble bust."

"Yes?"

"I want you to do more than restore it, for I want you to do the job as quickly as possible."

"Possibility has its limits," said Antonides. "Show me the article."

Freyberger went out and took from the cab the drawer wrapped in the sheet, brought it in and unwrapped it.

Antonides examined the fragments.

"I will restore it for you," he said, after examining minutely several of the pieces and gauging in his mind the total number.

"How long will it take?"

"Oh—three days."

"That won't do. I want it by to-morrow morning."

Antonides raised his eyebrows and shrugged his shoulders.

"Look here," said Freyberger. "What will you charge to do it in three days?"

"You must understand," replied Antonides, "that I do not restore marble. I do not restore pictures now myself. I am getting old, Mr. Freyberger."

"We are all doing that. What will you charge——"

"Getting old," continued Antonides, as though unconscious of the other's question, "costs money; one has to call in help. I have secured an assistant, an Alsatian; his name is Lermina——"

"Yes, yes, but——"

"I taught him the art of restoration; the knowledge I have placed in that man's head," said the old gentleman, suddenly pretending to turn savage, "is worth a king's ransom, and he has repaid me in the oldest coinage of the world —ingratitude——"

"I know, but what will you charge——"

"One moment, I wish to explain my position. Lermina is a genius."

"Yes, yes, I grant that——"

"You know what geniuses are, just spoiled children; well, he is also about to get married——"

"What the devil has that to do with me——"

"One moment. A genius is bad enough to deal with, but a genius in love is infinitely worse. I ask Lermina to restore this bust, he accepts the commission, but he is in love and can't be hurried. Three days, well, with seven pounds in my hand I believe I could undertake

to persuade him to complete the thing in three days."

"Well," said Freyberger, who knew his man right to the place where his heart ought to have been. "Three days won't do for me. I must have the thing completed by to-morrow morning at ten o'clock."

Antonides said nothing, but, reaching down, produced an enormous snuff-box from under the counter, took a pinch, tapped the box, and put it back.

Then he smiled and shook his head.

"Come," said Freyberger, patiently. "By ten o'clock to-morrow morning."

"It's impossible."

"Nothing is impossible of this sort to you, if you are paid——"

"I would have to sit up all night——"

"Why, you said you had an assistant."

"I would have to sit up all night helping him; it would be a two mans' job."

Then suddenly:

"Twenty pounds?"

"I'll give you ten."

"I never haggle."

"I'll give you ten."

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"Not a penny under twenty, not a brass farthing, not a denier under twenty—look at my rent, look at my income-taxes to be paid. Five hundred pounds they robbed me of this year in income-taxes alone."

"Five hundred!"

"I mean fifty. I am a very poor man, Mr. Freyberger—no, no, no, not a penny under twenty."

"All right," said Freyberger. "If you won't do the job I know a man who will."

He took the drawer and carried it to the door.

"Eighteen," shrieked Antonides, as the detective fumbled with the door latch.

"I tell you what," said Freyberger. "I'll give you fifteen, and that's my ultimatum."

"Done," said Antonides. As a matter of fact he would have done the job for five pounds —for nothing. He divined, from the pieces he had examined, that the thing was superexcellent and by a master's hand, and he would have been satisfied to have put it together on spec if he were given a chance of purchasing it when completed.

Freyberger left the shop, and, getting into

the cab, ordered the cab-driver to take him to the Yard.

The War Office sometimes nods and the Admiralty has been known to indulge in reverie, but New Scotland Yard never sleeps.

The construction of the Criminal Investigation Department resembles the construction of some beautiful and intricate piece of mechanism.

The detection of crime is its chief function, but it has others. It keeps the eye of a stern father upon the lawbreakers. There is not a considerable criminal walking about free in London who is not known and docketed at the Yard.

It knows more about him than he knows about himself; it knows his height, weight and colour of his hair; it has the prints of his fingers and the photograph of his face; it knows where he lodges and with whom he associates; it knows the exact extent and bent of his moral twist.

When a crime of a special nature has been committed by some unknown person, the Yard searches amongst the criminals who make that especial crime their speciality.

One might fancy that in the case of a crime

committed by a man in the position of Sir Anthony Gyde the search for him would not be any more difficult than the search for a professional criminal. As a matter of fact, it is much more so.

Your non-professional lawbreaker has no associates to betray him, and what is more, being a novice, he adopts no beaten methods. He will often escape, because of his ignorance as to how he should hide, just as a novice in fencing will sometimes, through his own stupidity and want of knowledge, succeed in touching a master-at-arms.

There is nothing a detective dreads more than the ingenuous.

Whilst Freyberger had been pursuing his investigations the Yard had not been idle.

By eleven o'clock that morning an embargo had been laid upon all the ports of England, as close as that which Buckingham laid in the case of Anne of Austria's jewels.

No person in the least like Sir Anthony Gyde could possibly have left the Kingdom, unless by flight.

Every paper appearing after twelve carried his portrait far and wide. A hundred and fifty

detectives were at work upon the case, and not a train left London for the north, south, east or west whose passengers were not "filtered."

The Yard knows the importance of acting promptly and efficiently in a case like this. The first few hours are vital; it pours out money like water. Should the required person escape the first furious rummaging of the detective force the pursuit slackens, or seems to do so. In reality, the nets are still out. Months pass, the suspected one feels himself no longer searched for. "I am forgotten," he says. Then one day he makes a false move and feels a hand upon his shoulder.

When Freyberger returned to the Yard he found his Chief in consultation with his subordinates.

When a crime of great magnitude or intricacy occurs, a council of the brightest intelligences in the detective service is called.

It is technically known as the council of seven, which does not in the least mean that the number of consultants are always seven, for sometimes this or that member may be absent.

On this occasion there were only four men in consultation, including the Chief, but these four

men constituted a galaxy of almost infernal talent. They were seated about the room, and at the table, pen in hand, sat the Chief, Inspector Frost, a clean-shaved, youngish-looking man, with a dark moustache twisted up at the ends, sat nearly opposite the Chief.

Standing at the table, hat in hand and preparing to go, stood a medium-sized middle-aged man, with black hair, small black moustache, fresh-coloured face and an extraordinarily sharp and penetrating eye.

This was Professor Salt, the Home Office expert, the surgeon called in, in all cases of murder, when the skill of a surgeon or pathologist can be of any avail.

He had just been detailing the result of his examination of the head found at 110B Piccadilly.

The dentist who attended Sir Anthony was, unfortunately, away on a holiday in Cairo, so his evidence could not be obtained as to whether the head was truly that of Sir Anthony or not. Several men who had known him had examined the thing, and they all differed. Some said it most certainly was; some recognized a strong likeness, but could not be sure;

several declared that, in their opinion, it wasn't.

These people, who had been hurriedly summoned for the purpose of identifying the thing, were of all grades and professions.

Club waiters, a nobleman or two, the servants of the house, and others. When Freyberger, who was not a member of the high council, but who was admitted on account of his being an active agent in the case, when Freyberger had closed the door, saluted his Chief and taken a modest seat in a corner of the room, Professor Salt was just finishing the remarks he was making.

"You see," he said, "it is a matter of extraordinary difficulty to say exactly how long this head has been removed from the body; it has been dipped in some agent or passed through some process, which has discoloured the skin and shrunk the tissues. An acid might have done this, but, unfortunately for that theory, the skin gives a slightly alkaline reaction when touched with moist litmus paper. It has, to me, the appearance of a head that had been dried just as you dry a ham, by smoking it. Yet there is no trace of carbon to be found on the

skin. I confess I am somewhat at a loss, for a case of the kind has never come before me up to this, and I believe it is unique in forensic medicine. That head might have been removed from the body a year ago, so dehydrated are the tissues. I do not say, having in view some unknown preservative agent, that it may not have been removed twelve hours ago. But I can say this, that whoever removed it was a most skilled anatomist. I have had many cases of dismemberment; in all of them the head has been hacked off through the cervical vertebra. This is quite different: the head has been removed above the atlas, the ligaments cleanly divided; no trace of hacking is discernible at the base of the skull. The thing was not so much dismemberment as a surgical operation, conducted with extraordinary skill, the most extraordinary skill. I do not think," he finished with a grim smile, " that I could have done the thing so completely and artistically myself." He buttoned up his overcoat, bowed to the Chief, nodded to the detectives and departed.

" Well, Freyberger," said the Chief, " what news have you brought? "

"First, sir, may I ask two questions? Has the dentist given his decision? and have Coutts's examined the handwriting of Sir Anthony Gyde?"

"The dentist is absent and can't be called," replied the other. "And as for the bankers, Sir Anthony went in, signed a receipt for the delivery of the parcel containing his wife's jewels, which receipt was handed to the manager who released the jewels.

"The receipt was written before and handed to a man who knew Sir Anthony Gyde perfectly well. He asked Sir Anthony would he care to see the manager personally. Sir Anthony replied, no; that he was in a hurry. The man, one of the chief clerks, is prepared to swear on oath that it was Sir Anthony Gyde who signed the receipt, and no other. The chief cashier received the receipt from the manager's room, glanced at it, and passed it. Not long ago, on our applying to him to glance at it again and make sure, he has done so. He says he is sure that it is Sir Anthony's handwriting, but there is something about it that he can't make out; that it is not a forgery he is *certain,* but all the same, there is something about it strange to

him, some fine difference to the ordinary writing of Sir Anthony.

"He says he would cash a cheque on the signature without a moment's hesitation; you know, in a forgery, it is the slavish imitation and consequent cramping that marks the thing; no man's handwriting is exactly alike twice. Well, this thing is no slavish imitation of Gyde's handwriting; it is his, flowing and easy, and written under the eye of a clerk. All the same, there is something about it strange. Gyde, it would appear, must have been in a totally different frame of mind to what he has ever been before in his life when he wrote that signature. I can understand the cashier's meaning, I think, for these men's eyes and brains are so wonderfully trained that they can tell from a signature almost the emotions of the person to whom it belongs. Gyde may have been under the influence of some extraordinary emotion, never felt by him before, when he signed that receipt—as undoubtedly he was."

Freyberger listened attentively, and then proceeded to give the results of his investigations, speaking clearly and to the point.

He told how Gyde had hired the cab and

driven to Howland Street, presented a letter from Kolbecker and occupied his room; how Kolbecker had lived in Cumberland for the last six weeks and had been paying for his room in London, sending several postal orders to his landlady. "I have secured the envelope of the last of these letters," he said, taking the envelope from his pocket.

"Give it to me," said the Chief.

He glanced at it, and a change came over his face.

"The Chief Constable of Cumberland has sent me, with splendid promptitude, the blackmailing letters of Klein," he said. "They arrived only half an hour ago by special messenger. Here they are, and the handwriting of Kolbecker is the handwriting of Klein."

There could be no doubt; all three documents were in the same weird, extraordinary hand.

"Gyde," said Inspector Frost, "before he murdered his man must have got him to write that letter. One can understand him, having the murder in his mind, being wishful to have some hole or corner to hide in during the night. He could not stay the night at Piccadilly, knowing that at any moment he might be arrested."

"Yet," said Freyberger, "he went next morning to his bankers—an equally dangerous proceeding."

"The thing that strikes me," said Inspector Dewhurst, "is, why did he go to the Piccadilly house at all? We know he took his jewels with him, but the jewels came up with him from the north. He could have easily taken possession of his jewel case, sent his man on home with the rest of the luggage, telling him that he would not be back till the morning, and then have disappeared."

"If he had done that," said Freyberger, "the valet, Leloir, would now be alive, and not dead of terror."

There was a moment's silence.

"Again," said Inspector Long, a man with a black beard seated near one of the windows, "that head found in the cupboard. It is not Klein's, for Klein was a clean-shaven man. We know, from the evidence of a chambermaid, that there was nothing in the cupboard the day before. It must have been put there during the night; therefore, it must have been put there by either Gyde or his valet, for they alone were in the room; therefore they must have brought it

from the north. We know for certain that a man was murdered and decapitated in the north by Sir Anthony Gyde; there is not a hole in the evidence, the boy is perfectly believable; he is borne out by half a dozen witnesses, who saw the motor-car going and coming, and by the headless corpse of Klein. Well, then, did Sir Anthony bring two heads in that bag with him, the head of Klein and the one we found, which is so strangely like his own? "

There was another silence, and then Freyberger spoke, telling of the pieces of marble he had found in the drawer and how he had taken them to Antonides to be reconstructed.

" I did it on my own responsibility," he said, " knowing the desperate urgency of the matter; to-morrow we will see what the thing represents."

" You did right," said the Chief. " In a case like this, seemingly most intricate, it is often some by-bit of evidence that opens it up and exposes everything to the light. One of the points that strike me most is the anatomical knowledge and the dexterity shown in the removal of the head."

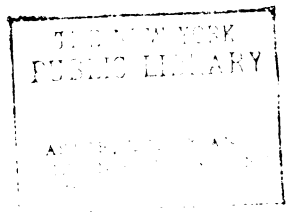
He ceased, for a knock came to the door and

an officer entered with a paper in his hand. "Report of the post-mortem examination of the body in the Gyde case, sir, just telegraphed from Carlisle."

"Give it me," said the Chief. He took the paper, and the officer withdrew.

"'Body of a fairly well nourished man, dressed in grey tweed—clothes slashed with a knife, but no wounds found on the body. *Head evidently removed by a skilled anatomist*—Ha! —severed from neck where atlas meets occipital bone, ligamentum nuchæ divided at a single stroke.' This, so far from clearing matters, casts everything into a deeper darkness." He paused a moment, and then went on. "We have incontrovertible evidence that yesterday afternoon Sir Anthony Gyde called upon the man Klein at a cottage on Blencarn Fell, in Cumberland; that he stayed there an hour and left with a black bag in his hand. Now, mark you, this boy, Lewthwaite, had his eye on the cottage the whole time. A very few minutes after Sir Anthony's departure he peeped through the window, and saw the murdered body of Klein lying upon the floor. The whole mass of evidence goes to show that there were

He Left with a Black Bag in His Hands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only two men concerned in this tragedy, Gyde and Klein, for Lewthwaite saw no one in the room."

"Might a third man have been in hiding in an upstairs room?" put in Inspector Long.

"He might, but it is highly improbable. Besides, we have no use for a third man, for the crux of the thing is this: Gyde murdered Klein and decapitated him. The head found in the cupboard was the head he removed from Klein's body; we are almost bound to believe this, from the two surgeons' reports as to the manner of decapitation—well, the head removed from the body of Klein was *not* Klein's head, for, leaving small points aside, Klein was a clean-shaved man and the head was the head of a bearded man.

"We can say now, almost for a certainty, that Klein has not been murdered, and that the real victim is a man extraordinarily like Gyde, the supposed murderer; more, several people have given evidence that the head *is* that of Gyde."

"I for one agree with you, sir, that the head we have here in London and the body that is

lying in Cumberland are one a part of the other."

It was Inspector Dewhurst who spoke.

"We know," he continued, "that Sir Anthony went into the cottage and went out, went to London, was recognized by numerous people; we know that *he* is alive; we know that a man very like him was murdered, a man who, whatever he was, was not Klein. But we know that the only motive for this deed was the blackmailing of Sir Anthony by Klein. Why, then, did Sir Anthony murder this other man?"

"Why," put in Freyberger, "were those blackmailing letters left behind. We can imagine a novice capable of such a blunder, but the whole of this affair has been conducted with such terrible precision and coolness that we can scarcely consider its author capable of such a slip as that. May I speak, sir?"

"It seems to me you are speaking," said the Chief, with a smile. "Go on, Freyberger; I am always glad to hear your views."

"Well, sir, it seems to me that there are many points in this case, each giving the lie to the other, each extraordinary. I have never come across such a chain of circumstances be-

fore. Accident might have cast all these extraordinary circumstances together. Gyle may have gone to murder his blackmailer, and found in the cottage, as well as his intended victim, a man exactly like himself. Gyde may have murdered this man for some reason or another and taken away his head; Gyde may have left those letters behind him from some extraordinary blunder. Klein may have given Gyde a written passport to his lodgings. Leloir, the valet, may simply have died of heart-disease. Gyde may have been a skilled anatomist, as well as a financier. All these are unlikely possibilities; each, taken separately, would not, in itself, cause us so very much surprise, but taken *en masse*, the combination is almost impossible, viewed as a combination caused by chance.

"If chance did not place these things in juxtaposition to confound our powers of reasoning, what did?

"There is only one possible answer. The problem before us is the work of some subtle and profound intelligence, that, for reasons of its own, has committed a murder, and, for easily understandable reasons, has fouled the traces, so that we are at fault and in confusion."

Freyberger paused and then went on: "I believe, reviewing the facts, that this intelligence, with which we are trying to grapple, is not that of Sir Anthony Gyde.

"You see, if we admit him to be the murderer, we must admit him to have committed so many self-condemning faults. Going openly to the cottage, in a motor-car of all things; leaving the letters behind him to damn him and expose his motive; removing his victim's head, yet leaving the body behind; going to his house in Piccadilly; going to his bankers to take away his jewels, when he could, if he chose, have removed his jewels, collected his money, and, having made provision for his escape and his future, then murdered Klein."

"One moment," said the Chief. "Gyde was a passionate man; he may have committed this murder in a fit of passion, and, in the upset of his brain, left those letters behind."

"Yes," said Freyberger. "But the hand that did the decapitation did not show any sign of brain-upset. Again, if a man murders another in hot blood does he decapitate him? Not as a rule.

"Of course, Gyde, if he were the murderer,

may have had some powerful reason for removing the head; but why should he leave it in a cupboard in his own house in Piccadilly as another damning piece of evidence against himself? You will excuse me, sir, for speaking so long, but I wish to say this:

"The faults before us are the continuous chance blunders of an unimaginable fool, if we view them as the faults committed by Sir Anthony Gyde. Sir Anthony Gyde could not have committed them; we may say *could not,* for they are too many to have been committed by a man with any reason in his head, even though in criminal matters he is a fool.

"Well, then, we are driven upon the only other supposition; that Gyde had nothing to do with the murder, and that these seeming faults are really not faults, or, in other words, they are faults committed purposely by some keen intelligence to bring confusion into the case. I think what I have said is almost mathematically demonstrable.

"I do not like to say any more, except this, that in my firm belief Sir Anthony Gyde is innocent."

There was a murmur from the other men

present, a murmur of admiration for the logical reasoning of the little German.

"Well," said the Chief, "your argument is clever. We must admit that, if Gyde is the murderer, then Gyde has committed more faults in the business than it is at all probable he would commit. If Gyde is not the murderer, then some other man is; if that is so, I am bound to admit that this other man has not only successfully fouled his traces but has cast, in some extraordinary manner, the onus of the affair upon Gyde. The proof of that is," he continued, with a short laugh, "he has made us issue a warrant for Gyde's arrest. Have you anything more to say, Freyberger? What you have said already has been to the point."

"Only this, sir. Dr. Murrell is preparing the retina of the valet, Leloir. He intends photographing it by Mendel's process. He may, or may not, succeed; the thing fails as a rule, or only gives the faintest blur of a picture. But it seems that the rods and cones of the retina take a far more powerful impression in a case like this, if the subject has caught his last glimpse of earthly things by the electric light. It is just possible that the retina of Leloir may

give us a picture of what he saw before he died."

"The only two successful cases of the kind I have heard of," said the Chief, "occurred in Germany."

"That is true, sir," replied Freyberger. "The case of Ludwig Baumer, recounted by Casper; and the case of the courtesan, Gretchen Dreschfeld, which Addeler, the professor of forensic medicine at Bonn, made such a success of."

"When did Dr. Murrell say his results would be known?" asked the Chief.

"He did not say, sir; but, with your permission, I will call upon him now and see what hopes he can give us of a successful photograph."

"Do so," said the Chief, and Freyberger departed.

CHAPTER XVII

DR. GUSTAVUS MURRELL lived in Sackville Street, Piccadilly. He was a man of private means, and he possessed a medical practice that brought him in about a thousand a year. One of those pleasant practices, where the lowest fee for looking at a tongue is a guinea, and for an operation fifty.

He was a tall, well-groomed, handsome man of forty-five or so, with a jovial blue eye and a hearty manner. You never would have imagined that one of the chief hobbies of this healthy and happy-looking individual was grubbing in the cesspit of crime. Yet it was.

Only one of his hobbies, for he had several, photography amongst the rest.

Though a dilettante of criminal acts and possessed of a profound penetrative power, as far as human motives were concerned, Dr. Murrell was no amateur detective. He studied criminals just as a botanist studies fungi; they interested him, and he felt a sort of sympathy

for them, that sympathy which we all feel, more or less, for the things that interest us.

He acted as police surgeon, because, in that position, he was brought into contact with the people who helped to constitute his hobby. But he never helped the police in the least, beyond the assistance that his position bound him in duty to give.

On several occasions he could have given the police a clue that would have helped them considerably in their work, yet he refrained. He was the police surgeon, but he did not feel himself bound to help the police beyond the help that his surgical knowledge was able to give.

In the case of the valet Leloir he did not care twopence whether the result of his investigations brought a criminal to justice or cleared up a mystery.

The thing was outside his province, and he embarked on it because he was a photographer.

Freyberger arrived at Sackville Street about six, and found Dr. Murrell at home. The doctor was in his study, going over his case book, and he bade his visitor be seated.

"You have called about the case I saw this morning, I suppose?" said Dr. Murrell.

"Well, I have done what I said I would do. I have already removed the right eye, stripped the retina, exposed it and got a result; the picture is at present the size of a sixpence; my man is at work on it now; it is being reproduced and magnified enormously, under the rays of a five thousand candle-power arc-light. If you will call again to-night I will show you the ultimate result, larger than a cabinet-sized photograph."

"You have got a picture?" said Freyberger.

"I have got a picture," replied the other, "or fancy so, and, as I say, you will be able to see it to-night."

"What time shall I call?" asked the detective.

"Oh, about ten."

"The body has been removed to the mortuary?"

"Yes, it was there I took the eye, substituting a glass one. The inquest will be to-morrow, and, of course, the post-mortem. I expect the post-mortem will show that the man had a weak heart."

"You think he died of heart failure?"

"I have told you already he died of terror;

but I think the heart weakness was the secondary cause of his death. I see in the papers that a warrant is out for Sir Anthony Gyde. Have you caught him yet?"

"No," said Freyberger, "and we never will."

The other looked surprised.

"I have only skimmed through the report in the paper," he said. "From it I gather that it is very clearly proved that he has murdered a man up in Cumberland."

"You have not seen the head, then, that was found in his house in Piccadilly?"

"No, I was from home when they sent for me, and they called the Home Office expert in."

Freyberger gave him all the details we know, and the doctor sat listening and tapping with his pencil on the desk.

"Well," he said, when the other had finished, "you seem to have a pretty tangled skein to unravel; what I can show you to-night may help you or not. Call at ten; and now I must take leave of you, for I have another patient to see before dinner."

Freyberger bowed himself out. He had al-

most four hours to wait before the appointment, and, having nothing particular to do, he determined to make the best use he could of the time at his disposal, and have dinner.

He first telephoned to the Yard the result of his interview with Dr. Murrell, and then betook himself to a cheap restaurant in Soho, where he proceeded to revel in sauerkrout and beef, served with stewed plums, slices of sausage and other Teutonic delicacies.

Throughout all the varied experiences of his life he had never felt so much excitement as just now, waiting for the result of this sleight-of-hand photography, this attempt to trick nature out of one of her darkest secrets.

It was exactly ten o'clock when he reached the house in Sackville Street, and was admitted.

The doctor was not at home, but he had given instructions that the detective should be admitted to his private laboratory, there to await him.

It was a large room at the back of the house, built on a space that had once been a yard. It had a top light and something of the general aspect of an artist's studio.

Röntgen ray apparatuses, cameras, all sorts of odds and ends lay about, speaking of the occupant's bent.

Freyberger had not been waiting five minutes when the door opened, and Dr. Murrell, in evening dress, entered.

He held a small parcel in his hand.

"Good-evening," he said. "My assistant was called away half an hour ago and he left the result of his work for me; let's see what it is."

He undid the string from the parcel, and disclosed what at first sight appeared to be a large cabinet photograph.

He approached an electric light, bearing it in his hand; in the full glare of the light he examined it intently. Then he whistled softly to himself. He seemed quite lost in contemplation of the thing.

Freyberger, unable to contain his curiosity, came up behind the doctor and gazed over his shoulder at the photograph mounted upon the card.

It was a large grey-coloured platinotype, showing a blurred and misty picture; it was the picture of a human face.

It was the face, the sight of which had killed, from sheer terror, the valet Leloir.

The arteries of the dead man's retina had left their trace upon the photograph, but they did not blur the face; their tracery could be seen in the background, forming a sort of halo round the nebulous visage, that held the two gazers with a witchery all its own.

"That is the result," said the doctor, laying the photograph on a table near by.

Freyberger moistened his lips.

"Scarcely pretty," said Dr. Murrell, taking a cigarette from a box near by and offering his companion one.

"It's a face to give one pause," said Freyberger, lighting his cigarette in a meditative manner.

"I'm sure of this," said Dr. Murrell, leaning back against the mantelpiece and glancing sideways at the thing on the table, "that half of the impression that thing makes upon me is caused by the fact that I have the knowledge of how it was obtained.

"The fact of finding a man dead of terror and then finding that picture on his retina, is,

I think, part of the reason why I feel—pretty sick."

"It's bad enough," said Freyberger, bending over the table and staring at the thing.

"The other part of the reason is the thing itself."

Freyberger continued gazing without a word.

"You seem in love with it."

"I am studying it, stripping it of all its accessories. This is the portrait of a human face; it belonged to a person who was in the bedroom of Sir Anthony Gyde just before the death of Leloir; the sight of it killed Leloir, we may presume, from shock."

"Yes."

"Well, presumptions are sometimes wrong."

"Explain yourself."

"I am studying this face intently; it has all the features of an ordinary human, though very evil, face; in repose one may fancy it repulsive, but not especially alarming, certainly not alarming enough to kill a man from shock."

"Yes?"

"It is the expression of the thing that constitutes its chief feature."

"Yes."

"What is that expression? It is a compound of alarm and hatred."

"Yes," said the doctor, coming to the table and glancing at the thing, and then returning to his post at the mantelpiece. "Yes, I should say that is the expression—or at all events, a very good imitation of it."

"Well," went on the other, "from the expression on this face I construct the following hypothesis. Leloir suddenly entered his master's bedroom and found a stranger there, a stranger to whom the face whose picture we see here belonged. He surprised him, perhaps, committing some act, to which we have no clue; anyhow, he surprised him. Hence the expression."

"I can understand that causing the expression of alarm. How about the ferocious hatred we see here——"

"Mark you," said Freyberger, "I did not say terror. I said alarm. If you have ever alarmed a man and been attacked by him, you will understand how closely allied alarm and hatred of the most ferocious description may be. I have experienced the fact several times,

I assure you, in the course of my professional work."

"I can imagine so."

"Well, granting my supposition," continued the other, "we may ask ourselves, what was this man doing when Leloir surprised him? It was not the face of the creature that killed Leloir with shock we may presume, but the act he was committing. What was that act?"

"Trying to murder Gyde, perhaps, since it is known that Gyde was in the bedroom after the secretary heard that scream, which was evidently the scream of Leloir dying."

"I have quite cast Gyde out of my mind," said Freyberger. "I have quite come to the conclusion that Gyde has no more to do with this whole case than the child unborn. I am firmly convinced—mind, I say this to you privately—that the only criminal in this case is the man whom Gyde is supposed to have murdered, that is to say, the artist Klein, alias Kolbecker.

"I believe this face to be a portrait of Klein.

"I have no earthly idea yet of the full devilish ingenuity of the thing, but I feel assured that, whoever was murdered in the cottage on

the fells of Cumberland, Klein is the murderer. Gyde may be alive, Gyde may be dead, but I feel assured of this, that Klein murdered a man, and has arranged matters so that the public believe that he is the victim and Gyde the assassin. Now, I must go, for there is much work to be done. May I take this portrait with me? It is most important."

"Certainly, if you will return it to me when you have done with it. I want it for my museum."

"I will return it," said Freyberger. He did it up in the brown paper, placed it in the pocket of his overcoat, and, bidding Dr. Murrell good-night, departed.

In Piccadilly he hailed a cab and drove to Howland Street, to the house he had visited that afternoon.

On the way he reviewed many things in his mind.

He already had a theory. The theory that Gyde was innocent and Klein was the assassin. He had also a suspicion that Gyde was dead.

That this theory and suspicion cast the whole affair into deeper darkness was nothing if they were right.

Just now he felt that he was really coming to grips with that intelligence which, earlier in the day, he had dimly felt to be in antagonism with his own.

The intelligence of the being whose terrible portrait was in his pocket.

The landlady's husband opened the door in response to his knock.

He was a colourless and apathetic individual, who, when Freyberger introduced himself, showed him, without comment, into the fusty little sitting-room.

"I am sorry to trouble you," said Freyberger, when the woman appeared, "but I have a portrait I wish to show you; it is, I believe, the portrait of Mr. Kolbecker." He undid the covering of the parcel and exposed the picture.

The woman looked at it.

"Do you recognize it?"

"No."

Freyberger felt a chill of disappointment.

"And yet," she said.

"Yes?"

"I dunno—I wouldn't swear it wasn't—but it's different."

"Yes, yes; of course, that picture would not represent him in his ordinary state of mind; but if he were terribly angry about something, might his face be like that?"

"I've never seen Mr. Kolbecker put out; always most civil he was and paid his way regular; he wasn't a beauty, but I never found him anything but a gentleman. Only just before he went away Mrs. Stairs, who does the rooms of the gentleman lodgers, said to me, 'Mrs. Stevens, that man do give me the creeps.'

"'Which man?' I says.

"'The top-floor front,' she replies.

"'Mr. Kolbecker?' I said.

"'Yes,' she said, 'the German.'

"'Well,' I replied to her, 'as long as he don't creep away without settling his bill, it's all I cares about him.'"

"You think this might possibly be a portrait of Mr. Kolbecker?"

"Well, I couldn't swear to it," said she, fixing her gaze again upon the thing. "At first, when you asked me, I'd have said not, but when I look longer it seems to me there's a likeness, but if you wish to see what he was really like I can show you his photograph."

"His photograph! Why did you not tell me you had one?"

"Because you never asked."

"Of course, of course, it was my fault; but please, if you will be so kind, let me see it."

She left the room, and returned with a small photograph in her hand. Freyberger almost snatched it from her, held it under the lamp and examined it.

It was somewhat faded, and at the bottom of the card appeared the photographer's name and address.

"Gassard, 110 Boulevard St.-Michel, Paris."

He examined the face.

It was a face to give a physiognomist (to use Freyberger's expression) pause. A face quite impossible to describe. One might say that the cheekbones were abnormally flat and the face very wide across them. That the nose was terribly pinched at the root; that the eyes were somewhat of the Mongolian type; all this would give no idea of the physiognomy upon which Freyberger's eyes were fixed.

It was a repulsive face, even in repose, and the most distinctive thing about it was the expression, an expression cold and evil; a thought-

ful expression, that made one shudder in trying to conjure up the thoughts that had given it birth; the expression of Osimandias, of the cruel and cold and the diabolically clever.

Between this faded photograph and the retinal picture there lay a world of difference, all the difference between a landscape seen in the calm of a still winter's day and the same landscape tempest-torn; yet they were pictures of the same person, and of this Freyberger felt sure.

He could fancy that brow suddenly contracted, those thin lips suddenly puffed out, those nostrils expanded and the whole reptile hatred of the demon-reptile brain suddenly writing itself in furious lines, speaking, shrieking aloud.

A feeling of triumph filled his breast; he had got one step further towards his antagonist.

He turned the back of the photograph to the light and examined it. There was no writing upon it; and yet, on closer examination, there were some indistinct scratches on the upper part, as though pencil writing had once been there and erased. On closer examination still, he could just make out what seemed a capital *M*,

and close to the *M* some letters vaguely dented into the shiny card by the pressure of the pencil that had written whatever had been written and erased.

"Thank you," said Freyberger, when he had finished his inspection of the thing. "This photograph is very interesting and it may help us considerably in our work. May I keep it?"

"Well," said the woman, "it is not mine to give; it was found in Mr. Kolbecker's room by Mrs. Stairs after he left for Cumberland, and she brought it to me. It's no value to me, and if it will help you to find out who killed him you had better take it. Mind you, I look to you to see me righted, and I don't want this house brought into the papers; it's hard enough getting a living without getting a name for being mixed up in murders.'"

"I will see that you don't suffer in any way," replied the other, "and I will give you a receipt for this photograph, just as I gave you one for those pieces of marble this afternoon."

He wrote out a receipt on a sheet of paper torn from his notebook, and with the photograph in his possession left the house.

When he reached the Yard it was a little after twelve.

The Chief was absent, snatching a few hours' sleep possibly, after a day of fourteen hours' solid work, in which the consideration of the Gyde case had been only an item.

Inspector Dennison was in, and Freyberger found him and put the evidence he had collected in his hands.

Freyberger had that tremendous advantage which helps a man along in the world as much, or more, than industry or genius. He was a general favourite. A favourite, not because he was all things to all men, or gave the wall to any man, or truckled, or trimmed, or did anything small, so as to make himself pleasing. He was a favourite because he was straight and honest, always ready to help another man, ever ready to praise what seemed to him praiseworthy or criticise what seemed to him wrong. In fact, there was nothing small about him, except his person, and even that was not particularly small, just a shade under the middle size.

Inspector Dennison, a very big man, both physically and by reputation, liked the little

German, and when Freyberger showed him his results he did not criticise them destructively. He went carefully through the matter of the photographs without showing the slightest surprise at the marvellous retinal picture.

He said he failed to see much resemblance between it and the French photograph, but that possibly, allowing for the vast difference in expression and the vagueness of the retinal picture, they might be photographs of the same person.

He did not recognize so fully as Freyberger the possibility of connexion between the hellish face and the subdued and self-contained face, but he recognized it.

"There is something on the back of this photograph I want to examine more attentively," said Freyberger. "Something has been written with a pencil; the writing has been rubbed out, but the dent remains. Have you a lens, not a too powerful one?"

Dennison produced one from a drawer, and his companion took it and proceeded to examine the marks.

"I can make out an *M.*, there is then a space, over the space there are two dots, a little fur-

ther along occurs an *l* followed by—is it a *t* or an *l*? Ah! yes, it must be an *l*, though the loop is very indistinct; then occurs an *i* without a dot and an *r*. Thus:

"'*M*..*llir*.'"

"That doesn't tell much," said Dennison.

"No," replied Freyberger, "but it tells me one thing."

"What is that?"

"That whatever was written was not written in English."

"How so?"

"Those two accentuating dots are never used in English. They are used sometimes—very rarely—in poetry, I believe, but we may suppose the writing on this to have been in prose."

"Let's suppose so," said Dennison. "Though I've seen poetry written on the back of a photograph before this; it was in the case of a fellow called Buckingham. He'd given it to his girl, and the next thing he did was to murder her. His poetry hanged him."

"I don't know of any language," said Freyberger, contemplatively, "in which the combination *llir* might occur commonly; *lir* is, of course,

common; *llir* most uncommon; suppose it is an *e,* though there is no perceptible loop—*ller.* "

"That seems to me as uncommon as the other," said Dennison.

"Ah," cried Freyberger, suddenly, "I have it."

"What?"

"See!"

Freyberger snatched a pen and wrote in large letters upon a sheet of paper—

"*Müller.*"

"By jove, yes," said Dennison, "that might be it."

"I think it's likely," said the other. "First of all it's a name, and a name is the most likely thing to be written on a photograph. Then the thing constructs itself easily. Dennison, without those two dots, the idea would not have occurred to me. Those two dots may be the means of finding our man. Another point, the writing, whatever it was, formed a single word, and that word was erased.

"Now, what form of a single word is most likely to be carefully erased? The name of a person, I think?"

"That is so."

"I'm going home to bed now," said Freyberger, "to get a few hours' sleep, but before I go I will ring up Paris."

"Yes," said Dennison, "it's well to give them all the facts now, and they can make inquiries first thing in the morning."

"The thing I'm bothered about," said Freyberger, "is that I don't know whether Gassard is still in the Boulevard St.-Michel. I was over there two months ago on that bank-note forgery case, and I routed out all the photographers in the Latin Quarter. I had a long list. If Gassard's name had been on that list, I almost think it would have sprung alive into my head on reading it on this photo, for I have a memory that is not so bad."

He went to the telephone and rang up the Prefecture of Police. The reply call did not come for five minutes. Then Freyberger put his ear to the receiver.

A thin, acidulous voice came through the humming of the wires.

"I wish," said Freyberger, speaking in excellent French, "to make some inquiries as to M. Gassard, photographer, of Boulevard St.-Michel. I wish to know if he is still in busi-

ness, and, if not, where he is to be found,—Freyberger, Inspector, Scotland Yard."

The answer did not come for ten minutes.

Then the bell rang and the thin voice replied.

" Gassard, of 110 Boulevard St.-Michel, sold his business three years ago. March 10, 19—, he left Paris. We have no trace of him. He was succeeded by Madame ——, a modiste."

" Luck is against us," said Freyberger, hanging up the receiver. " Never mind, we have the name, and a name is a good deal in a case like this."

CHAPTER XVIII

FREYBERGER was up betimes next morning, and having called at the Yard and found his chief not yet arrived, and no further news concerning the Gyde case, he betook himself to Old Compton Street, Soho.

In Old Compton Street you may buy a French newspaper or a German sausage. You can get anything in an Italian way, from a pound of macaroni to a knife in your back, if you know the right way to look for it. It is a street of many nations and its kerb is trodden by all sorts of celebrities, from the new tenor at the Italian opera in furs, to Enrico Malatesta in rags.

A dingy-looking Hebrew boy was just taking down the shutters of Antonides' dusty-looking shop, when Freyberger arrived a few minutes after nine.

The boy asked him to be seated, whilst he apprised his master of the presence of a customer.

"He ain't down yet," said the youth. "Never comes into the shop till half after eleven. I'm lockin' the shop door on you whilst I go up, for Mr. Antonides said no one was to be left alone in the shop, unless the door was locked on them, for fear they'd be carryin' off sumefin."

He locked the door, went upstairs and presently returned, saying that Mr. Antonides would be down in a minute.

Freyberger sat looking about him at the various objects of art: the cracked china, the dingy pictures, the dented armour.

The old Greek did not make much money out of these things; his fortune was derived from the occasional great deal that his genius was able to bring off. The Hermes, dredged up from the sea by fishermen off Cape Matapan, and now in possession of Droch, the German manure-millionaire of Chicago, passed through the hands of Antonides and left three thousand pounds in his pocket. Half a dozen broken pieces of marble, bought from a fellow Greek for a few pounds, and restored, had resulted in an almost perfect bust of Clytie, worth—the value of the cheque it brought him is unknown.

He was the prince of restorers, whether in marble or canvas.

As Freyberger sat looking around him, he suddenly became aware of a new object in his purview, that was not an object of art.

Through the half-opened door, leading from the shop to the house, a long, lean, claw-like hand was beckoning to him.

He arose and came towards it. It was the hand of Antonides, and Antonides himself was waiting for him in the passage beyond the door.

The passage was dark, and so were the stairs up which Antonides led him.

"It's done," said the old man, pausing in the middle of the stairs and speaking backwards over his shoulder at Freyberger. "I have completed it."

"I'm glad to hear that, but don't stop; this staircase of yours is not cheerful."

Antonides went up two more steps and stopped again.

"I think you said fifteen guineas, Mr. Freyberger?"

"Pounds."

"Guineas."

"Pounds."

"Mr. Freyberger!"

"Go on—I don't mean go on talking, go on up the stairs. I'm not going to give you a penny more than the fifteen pounds."

"Why, God bless my soul!" shouted the old fellow, falling into one of his simulated rages, "guineas were what I bargained for, guineas were in my head; they kept me alive all last night working for you, and now you say pounds." Then, suddenly falling calm, "Never mind; wait till you see it and you won't say pounds.'"

He led the way across a dingy and dimly lit landing into a room that was simply packed with all sorts of lumber. Canvases, six deep, with their faces turned to the wall, a torso just restored, a lay figure, masks and moulds, a hugh mass of plasticine on a board, strange-looking instruments, and, on a bench near the window, something over which a cloth was thrown.

"That's it," said Antonides, pointing to the object under the cloth. "I have covered it that the plaster of the joinings may not dry too quickly. You are on the Gyde case, Mr. Freyberger?"

"How did you know that?"

"I'll tell you soon, and I'll tell you something more."

"Yes."

"You've lost fifteen shillings by making me that answer. You should have answered me, 'What makes you think that?' That would have been non-committal. You have as good as told me you are on the Gyde case; never give information away for nothing, Mr. Freyberger, unless it is false."

"Or useless."

"True information is never useless—see, here, there's my work."

He took the covering from the object on the table and disclosed to view the bust of a man.

It was an extraordinarily fine piece of work, full of life and vigour. It represented a bearded man of about fifty.

Even a person who had never seen the original would say, on looking at it: "That must be a good portrait."

It had individuality.

That is to say, it had, what nearly all modern sculpture lacks, Life.

In portraiture there is only one real medium

—marble. Paint, photography, Berlin wool-work, all are pretty much on the same level when compared to marble, cut by the chisel of a master.

Whoever has seen the statue of Demosthenes, by Praxiteles, has heard Demosthenes speak; has seen him as he once stood in the Agora.

A man's face is individuality, expressed by a million curves; in a portrait these curves are suggested; in a bust they are reproduced.

This bust, reconstructed and unveiled by Antonides, was a triumph of art.

"Ah!" said the old Greek, forgetting even gold for a moment and staring at the thing he had unveiled. "What Philistine smashed it? If he wanted to use his hammer why did he not wait for the next opening of the English Royal Academy? But if he had done that, of course, he would not have been a Philistine, but a lover of art."

"It is a fine piece of work," said Freyberger, "and you have done the restoration not badly."

"Which reminds me of my fifteen shillings," replied the other.

"How?"

"This way. Detective Freyberger brings me a bust to reconstruct. Now, detective officers, however clever, do not as a rule call upon me with busts to be reconstructed without a motive. Do you know whom that piece of marble represents?"

"No."

Antonides rubbed his hands together. "Would you give me fifteen shillings to learn?"

"I would."

"Well, I already know that you are on the Gyde case, which is in all the papers."

"Who told you?"

"That bust, and you confirmed my knowledge by admitting the fact."

"It may be a speaking likeness of some one, but I doubt if it is so full of speech as that."

"Oh, yes, it is; now do you know whom it represents?"

"I tell you again, No."

"It is a bust of Sir Anthony Gyde."

"Hum," said Freyberger, concealing the satisfaction that this confirmation of his already formed suspicion gave him. "And how do you know that?"

"Good Lord," said Antonides. "How do I know that? Why, he has been in my shop twenty times if once."

"Here's your fifteen shillings," said the detective.

"And how about my fifteen pounds?"

"Here they are."

"Thanks, and remember the words of an old man. If you had kept your mouth shut it might have saved you fifteen shillings, if I hadn't known for a certainty that you were on the Gyde case. Then I would have said, 'Oh, he knows whom the thing represents,' and I would have talked about it and given information for nothing. You wish to take the thing away?"

"Yes."

"Well, you can't till this evening, for the joinings will not be firmly set till then. I will send it for you to the Yard. It will be quite safe here."

"Very well. But don't send it; one of our men will call for it. Yes, you have made a very good job of it and I congratulate you. I know something about art."

"You?" said Antonides, contemptuously,

pocketing the notes. "And what branch of art do you know something about?"

"Cookery. I am going over to the Itala to have some breakfast; come with me."

"You pay?"

"Yes."

Antonides grinned, wriggled out of the gabardine he wore, got into an old frock-coat that was hanging from a nail on the wall, put on an old top-hat, led the way downstairs, set the Jew boy to clean some bronzes, locked him into the shop, and, pocketing the key, followed Freyberger across the way to the restaurant.

During breakfast he talked and Freyberger listened. He talked of the bargains he had made, of the sales he had attended, of the men he had seen swindled, omitting, by some lapse of memory, the men he had swindled. He talked of modern and ancient art. "Sculptors," he said; "the race has vanished. Except the unknown man who chiselled that bust I have just repaired, I know of no living sculptor."

"You knew Sir Anthony Gyde well?" asked Freyberger.

"I knew him for years," replied the art dealer, through whose brains the fumes of the

chianti he had drunk were pleasantly straying; "for years; and mark you this, Mr. Freyberger, I don't believe that man could have committed a murder, unless he went mad."

"Why not?"

"He had not the eyes of a murderer, the cheekbones of a murderer, or the thumbs of a murderer."

"Oh, you are evidently a dilettante in murder."

"No, I am not, but I am a man of the world, and I have seen much of people. Sir Anthony Gyde—God help me! I sold him a Corôt once that was—well, no matter. What was I saying? Oh, yes! murderers, as a rule, are men with blue eyes, pale blue eyes. A murderer ought to have broad, flat cheekbones, it's a desperate bad sign in a man; Gyde had neither of these points, nor the thumbs. Tropmann had enormous thumbs, but it is not so much the size of the thumb as the character of it. I can't describe a brutal thumb no more than I can describe a beautiful face, but I know it when I see it. A glass of Bénédictine, please. Murderers come into my shop, I won't say every day, but often. My dear friend, the world is full of them. You

will ask, if that is so why are so comparatively few murders committed? For this reason, very few people have the motive for slaying a fellow man or woman. I myself cannot remember a single time in my life when the commission of a murder would have benefited me much, and when that murder could have been committed by me with reasonable chance of not being discovered.

"Yes, want of motive and fear of the gallows, which is stronger in man than the fear of God, keeps numerous people from figuring in wax in the Chamber of Horrors of Madame Tussaud's. But want of motive chiefly."

Freyberger paid the bill, and leaving the gruesome old man to his cigarettes and Bénédictine, returned to the Yard. He felt himself a step nearer to that unseen adversary, whose subtleties he was disclosing piecemeal.

Why had Kolbecker a bust of Sir Anthony Gyde in his possession, a bust most possibly constructed by himself? Why had he destroyed it?

It was only another unanswerable question amidst the many unanswerable questions contained in this mysterious case, but in it Frey-

berger felt, by instinct, lay the answer to all the other questions and the solution of the whole riddle.

So completely had the dominating mind with which he was at war succeeded in its work that every clue the case presented added confusion to confusion.

Yet at any moment some spark of information might make all these conflicting pieces of evidence fly together and form a whole, just as the electric spark in an atmosphere of oxygen and hydrogen causes the atoms of gas to fly together and form clear water.

The Chief received Freyberger and his evidence, and complimented him on what he had done.

"We have little else," said he. "Nothing material has turned up, only this. Gyde called at Smith and Wilkinson's, the jewellers, in Regent Street, yesterday, signed a cheque for ten pounds and got them to cash it. He called shortly after ten. That is to say, a few minutes after he left Coutts's."

"Good Heavens," said Freyberger, "when will the wonders of this case cease? He had just left Coutts's, where he could have cashed

a cheque for five hundred, and he goes into a jeweller's and cashes a cheque for ten.

"Mind you, the man is in fear of his life; he has collected all his jewels. One would suppose he wanted to collect all the money he could, too, yet he makes a cheque out for ten pounds only, and adds to his traces by cashing it at a jeweller's, when he could easily have cashed it at his bankers."

"That is so," said the Chief. "Yet the fact remains. The manager of Smith and Wilkinson's called at Vine Street this morning with the news. Go to their shop and see what you can discover."

Freyberger did not need to be told twice.

He found the manager of Smith and Wilkinson's in.

He was a stout, florid man, with a short manner.

His tale was that at ten-fifteen or ten-twenty a. m. on the preceding day Sir Anthony Gyde, a customer well-known to the firm, entered the shop and asked him (Mr. Freeman, the manager) to cash a cheque for ten pounds. Sir Anthony took his cheque book from his pocket and wrote out a cheque for ten pounds, payable to

him, endorsed it, and handed it to him, Freeman, who cashed it, giving gold.

"I should like to see the cheque," said Freyberger.

The manager produced it. It was uncrossed.

"Have you presented it for payment yet?" asked the detective.

"Of course not, else it would not be here."

"I have a grim suspicion that it would."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I believe it to be a forgery."

"Nonsense," said Freeman. There was an arrogance and a dash of impudence in this man's manner that irritated our friend Freyberger.

"You come with me to Coutts's," said he, "and we will see."

"Yes," said Freeman, "we will see."

They took a hansom, and neither of them spoke a word till they drew up at Coutts's.

Freeman strutted in ahead of his companion and asked to see the manager on important business; when the clerk showed the way to the manager's office, Freeman went first, Freyberger following humbly in his wake. "Never

mind," thought Freyberger, "he'll soon be playing another tune."

The manager, an aristocratic-looking man with long white hands, side whiskers and a bald head, turned over the cheque in a meditative manner. "This cheque is perfectly in order," he said.

"This gentleman seems to think otherwise," said Freeman.

"Decidedly," said Freyberger. "I am unacquainted with Sir Anthony Gyde's handwriting, but I have every reason to believe the signature on that cheque to be a forgery."

"Excuse me," said the manager. "Er—your authority—you are?"

"Inspector Freyberger, of Scotland Yard."

"Ah!" He rang the bell and ordered the chief cashier to be called. "Mr. S——," said the manager, when that functionary appeared, "we have here a cheque of Sir Anthony Gyde's; cast your eye upon it and tell me, would you cash it were it presented to you in the ordinary course of business?"

The chief cashier cast his eye over the cheque just once.

"I would cash it," he replied.

"It is, in your opinion, the writing of Sir Anthony Gyde?"

"Yes, sir."

"Thank you," said the manager, and the cashier withdrew.

Freeman gave a self-satisfied and contemptuous sniff.

There is more, sometimes, in a sniff than can be conveyed by any number or combination of words, and this sniff of Freeman's went to the detective's marrow; it contained quite a lot of things, self-commendation and contempt for the intelligence of Freyberger included.

"Considering," said Freeman, "that I have the pen in my pocket with which I saw Sir Anthony write the cheque, I would have been justified in presenting the thing for payment, notwithstanding the doubt cast upon it by this man," indicating Freyberger; "but he was so sure that I accompanied him here, losing precious time in the transaction. I shall take care that the matter is represented to his superiors at New Scotland Yard."

"Oh," said Freyberger, who had been plunged for a moment in thought, and who seemed quite oblivious to the insulting remark

just uttered. "You have the pen in your pocket, have you, with which Sir Anthony wrote this cheque? Please produce it."

Freeman produced it with a compassionate smile. He was beginning to feel almost sorry for the man he had brought to confusion.

Freyberger's steel grey eyes sparkled for a second when he saw the pen. It was a stylograph, not a fountain.

He wrote a few words on a piece of paper with the pen and then handed it, with Sir Anthony's cheque, to the manager.

"Could those two writings have come from the point of the same pen?" he asked.

"Oh, dear no," said the manager. "This," pointing to Freyberger's writing, "is written with a stylograph; this," pointing to the cheque of Sir Anthony, "is written with an ordinary pen. The writing varies in thickness. It is quite clear."

"Quite," said Freyberger.

Freeman flew into a rage. "You mean to suspect me——" he cried.

"I suspect you of nothing," said Freyberger; "if I did I would take you into custody. You have been simply imposed upon. That

cheque of Sir Anthony Gyde's is genuine. This is what has happened. A person whom you took for Sir Anthony Gyde entered your shop yesterday morning. He had in his pocket a stolen cheque of Sir Anthony's.

"He asked you to cash a cheque; you consented, and lent him your pen. He took a chequebook from his pocket, and wrote or pretended to write out a cheque for ten pounds. He never gave you that cheque; by a sleight of hand, simple enough, he gave you the genuine cheque, and you cashed it."

"But why," said the manager, "did he go to all this trouble? Why did he not simply walk into Mr. er—Freeman's place of business and say, 'I have a cheque of mine here for ten pounds, will you cash it for me?'"

"I suspect," said Freyberger, "that he wished to confuse the police. He wished to make us believe that Sir Anthony Gyde was alive and well at ten-twenty a. m. yesterday morning. The fact that he wrote that cheque at ten o'clock yesterday morning would, I confess, have helped to shake a certain theory that I have concerning the case."

"But surely," said the manager, "Sir An-

thony *is* alive. It is a dreadful business, but I gather, from the papers, that he is alive and being searched for."

"That is as may be," said Freyberger. Then, suddenly, "Hullo! hullo! what's this?"

He seized the cheque from the table. "It only shows how limited our powers of perception are, and how, in fixing one's eyes upon one part of a thing, one loses sight of another. To-day is the eighth of the month. What day of the month was yesterday, Mr. Freeman?"

"The seventh," said Freeman, in a sulky tone.

"And this cheque is dated the sixth."

It was so. In considering the signature they had overlooked the fact that the cheque was ante-dated.

"I think," said Freyberger, "that this fact confirms my suspicion that the cheque was not written yesterday in Messrs. Smith and Wilkinson's shop."

"You may be right," said Freeman, "but I will swear that the person who gave me that cheque was Sir Anthony Gyde."

"Ah, Mr. Freeman," said Freyberger, in a bitter tone of voice, "if you had only examined

that cheque properly, if you had only said to yourself, ' This could not possibly have been written with my stylograph,' if you had only jumped across the counter and seized Sir Anthony Gyde, as you call him, you would have seized the greatest villian that ever cursed the world by his presence. But you are a tradesman, suspicious towards the needy, unsuspicious towards the rich. Well, no matter—we will require your evidence at the proper time. Meanwhile, I will impound this cheque, giving the bank a receipt for it."

He did this.

" If you will apply to our cashier," said the manager to Freeman, " you will receive the amount due on the cheque, as it is in order, and we have absolute belief in your integrity in the matter, and the cheque has not been stopped by the only person capable of stopping it, Sir Anthony Gyde."

CHAPTER XIX

FREYBERGER left the bank and betook himself to the Yard, there to report proceedings.

Again he felt himself a step nearer this mysterious personage, whose subtle and sinister processes he was slowly exposing to the light of day, or rather to the light of reason. Not one, of all the things he had discovered, would give in itself a clue. Collectively, they were perplexing. But they had given to Freyberger this great advantage, he was beginning to follow his adversary's process of reasoning.

Their two minds, like two armies on a dark night, were already in touch. Neither could see the other, except in occasional faint glimpses. But any moment the moon might break through the clouds, giving light to fight by, and the general action commence.

At the Yard no more information had come in of any worth. Several men answering to the description of Sir Anthony Gyde had been arrested on suspicion and had been released.

Freyberger, off his own bat, had done more to cast light on the case than the whole force of the Yard, and though the light he had cast only showed a mass of confusion, *the light* was not the less valuable for that. I have said that the Chief, for some time past, had recognized Freyberger as a coming man; this case had already confirmed his judgment, and he was quite prepared to give him a free hand and back him with all the colossal force at his disposal.

The power at the back of the Chief of the Criminal Investigation Department is prodigious. He has the Treasury of England at his disposal and the law officers of the Crown; an army of ten thousand picked men, such men as are not to be found in the ranks of any other constabulary in the world, and a general staff of the keenest detectives in Europe. He can arrest and cast in prison, he can practically place an embargo on ports. He holds the rod of the Wapentake, and there is only one living man he may not touch with it—the King.

Freyberger, having detailed his actions, and given a hint of his private opinions about the Gyde case, the Chief fell into a reverie for a few moments. Then he said:

"This man Klein, *alias* Kolbecker; this man, whom you suppose also to have figured under the name of Müller. Well, let us consider him a moment. Since the hour when Sir Anthony Gyde called at the cottage, since the hour Klein was supposed to be murdered in, we have had no hint that Klein has been seen in the flesh, whereas we have numerous witnesses who have incontestedly seen Gyde. If we suppose Klein to be living and Gyde dead, this fact seems strange."

"Excuse me, sir, but one man has seen Klein, *alias* Kolbecker, *alias* Müller—the valet Leloir. Witness the retinal photograph."

"Yes, that is true, if we can consider the retinal photograph a true picture of Klein. I have examined it in conjunction with the photo which is incontestably (from the landlady's evidence) a photo of Klein; well, I admit that the faces *may* be photographs of the same person in different moods of mind and taken under different conditions, but one could not swear to the fact."

"Sir," replied the other, "there are many facts one cannnot swear to—yet they are facts. Instinct requires no affirmation, and some in-

stinct tells me that not only is Gyde guiltless of the murder of Klein, but that Klein is the murderer of Gyde.

"The face of the man Müller, which is incontestably the face of the man Klein, speaks to me in the old and long-written language of human expression. It is a terrible face and full of evil, full of logic and subtlety and craft. It is the face of a mathematician, yet the face of a satyr. It is cold as ice.

"The face in the retinal picture is filled with fire, the fire of the infernal regions. I construct from the two pictures a personality rare in the annals of crime. A criminal genius, actuated by more than ordinary motives, using extraordinary precautions, inventing new ways. The extraordinary folly of the ordinary criminal is nowhere to be found in the mass of evidence before us. Even the cleverest criminal we know of is clever only intermittently; his work is not, as a rule, a masterpiece, thought out to the very last detail; if it is, it is planned on old-fashioned lines.

"I can say this of the Gyde case, that in my humble opinion it is a flawless piece of criminal work carried out on entirely new-fash-

ioned lines. The work of a genius, and we must treat it as such. I have said that I believe Klein is the active agent and is alive, here in London possibly. Well, I entreat you not to search for him in the ordinary way, not to send his photograph to the papers. I could almost say not to circulate his photograph amidst the force. Don't search for him."

"Why?"

"Because you will not find him. A man like that is not to be taken by ordinary methods. Our one chance is to leave him lulled in security and under the impression that Gyde is being pursued. Were he to see his photograph in the papers, were he to imagine his photograph was in circulation amongst the police, he would . . ."

"Yes?"

"Vanish, become some one else, or, at all events, his genius would not nod in fancied security, but keep wide awake and watchful."

"I will give you forty-eight hours, Freyberger," said the Chief; "forty-eight hours to tackle this man your own way; use all your powers, do what you will. If, at the end of that time, you do not bring me Klein or rea-

sonable evidence that you are close on his track, I will search for him in the ordinary way. I will drag London with a dragnet."

"Forty-eight hours," said Freyberger, "and only sixty minutes to every hour; well, I can but try."

CHAPTER XX

FREYBERGER was now virtually in charge of the case.

He had forty-eight hours before him. He felt about the case just as an engineer feels about some delicate piece of mechanism, which has not yet been put in position, and which any jar or shock may destroy. He shuddered to think of the brutal method of a dragnet search being applied to the Gyde case.

It would be like chasing a moth with a pair of tongs. A million to one the thing will not be caught and a certainty that, if caught, it will be ruined.

He fancied the derision with which the dark spirit with which he was at war would greet the efforts of the police.

It was half-past one now, the hour when he usually had luncheon, but to-day he was not hungry. He went to a private room, got all the *pièces de conviction* together and then proceeded

to go through the whole case, incident by incident, item by item.

A few more details had come to light in the last few hours. The full report of the post-mortem examination of the body found in the cottage on the fells had come to hand.

There was mention of no mark upon it that might serve for identification; the height before decapitation the surgeon judged would have been about five feet eight inches. The underclothes were marked "E. K.," evidently Klein's initials.

At five o'clock Freyberger had finished his review of the case, every minutest detail was in his memory and ready to spring into position when required.

He was just folding up his papers when a knock came to the door and an officer entered with an envelope in his hand.

"From the Chief," said the messenger; then he withdrew.

Freyberger opened the envelope. It contained a copy of a message just received from Carlisle.

"Very sorry, one detail overlooked by some strange mischance in report of Gyde case.

Over second right costal cartilage of body found, are the initials 'E. K.,' faintly tattooed."

Freyberger gave a cry. The whole case for him had tumbled to pieces like a house of cards. If "E. K.," Klein's initials, were tattooed on the corpse, then the corpse was Klein's, Gyde was a murderer, and Freyberger a fool—so he told himself.

He paced the room rapidly in anger and irritation. The chance of his life had not come then; he had been fighting air, and all the time he had fancied himself matched against a demon with the intellect of a Moltke!

Freyberger, so logical, so calm, so commonplace-looking at ordinary times, was terrible when in anger. His face quite changed and a new man appeared; a ferocious and formidable individual, utterly destitute of fear.

It was the second Freyberger who had arrested Macklin, the Fashion Street murderer; Macklin, armed with a crow-bar, Freyberger armed with a walking-cane.

It was this second Freyberger who was now pacing the room, treading on the fragments of his shattered theory. Suddenly he paused,

placed his hand, with fingers outspread, to his temples and stared before him at the wall of the room, as though it were hyaline and through it he saw something that fascinated, astonished and delighted him.

"Ah! what is this, what is this?" he murmured: "'Two faint blue letters tattooed over the second right costal cartilage'—The Lefarge case, the bust of the man, the artist. My God! Why did not this occur to me before? What is memory, what is memory, that she should hold such information and yet withhold it till touched by a trifle? My theory is not shattered. Though these letters, tattooed upon the corpse, plunges the case into deeper depths, though they show a more profound mechanism, what do I care for that, so long as they do not shatter my theory."

He left the room, gave all the things he had been examining into the safe keeping of the sergeant superintendent, and sought an interview with the Chief.

"I have received the information as to the tattooing, sir."

"I think that disposes of Klein," replied the Chief.

"I beg your pardon, sir, but I imagine that in these two letters the crux of the case lies. I believe these two letters are the point or points for which I have been seeking. When I got your communication a few minutes ago, I thought my theory shattered, but it has sprung to life again, not only renewed, but added to. The complexity of the whole thing has been increased doubly, but out of that complexity will now, I believe, spring simplicity. I wish to go home and study some old notes; if I may see you again, sir, in a few hours' time I hope to put the Gyde case before you in a new and most profoundly interesting light."

"Do so," replied the Chief; "investigate in your own way and as deeply as you will, but don't be led away by your own imagination, Freyberger."

"No, sir," replied Freyberger, with the simplicity, or the apparent simplicity, of a schoolboy replying to his master. Then he departed for his own rooms, that lay on the south side of the water.

I will lay it down as an axiom that a professional man is rarely of much use if he be not acquainted with the literature of his profession.

The army man who knows little of the history of war, the doctor who cares little for the history of medicine, the detective who knows nothing of the history of crime, are members of society rarely rising to greatness.

Now Freyberger was a German, absorbed in his profession, and if you know anything about Germans, you will agree with me that that statement covers a great many things. He could speak four languages fluently: English, German, French and Italian. Italian and French he had learned, not for pleasure, but because he felt that they might be useful to him in the pursuit of his vocation.

He read foreign newspapers and made notes of criminal cases that interested him. He had done this for some ten years, and in his shabby lodgings there were a series of notebooks containing the details of very curious crimes. He knew as much about the poisoners, Palmer and Smethurst, as though he had attended their trials, and from the Brinvilliers case to the case of Monk Léothade, to the case of François Lesnier, French criminal history was an open book to him.

The clocks were striking six when he arrived at his lodgings in Fox Street, S. E.

He occupied a sitting-room and bedroom on the first floor. The walls of the sitting-room were lined with books. It was a curious library. Any general information you wanted you could find here, and a whole lot of information by no means general. Amidst a host of books dealing with all sorts of facts you might have found Schiller, and a first edition of Heine's lyrics stood upon a shelf above the last edition of *Casper's Forensic Medicine.*

Tea-things were laid upon the table and a bright fire was burning upon the hearth, and it was an indication of the man's nature that, burning as he was to be at his notes, he first had tea and fortified the inner man with a meal that the inner man was badly in need of.

The notebooks, large volumes filled with press cuttings, were on a lower shelf. He took a small ledger, looked up the letter L, found the following entry: "Lefarge case, book B, page 115."

Then he placed book B upon the table, opened it at page 115 and, drawing up a chair, plunged into details.

He just scanned the columns of printed matter over first for names before going through the case in detail. His heart bounded when he came upon the name, "Müller," and again upon the name Müller, and again and again.

Müller had a lot to do with the business dealt with by all these columns of printed matter.

That business was what is known in the annals of crime as the Lefarge case; and it had occurred eight years previously in Paris, and the details are as follows:

M. Lefarge, it appears, had owned a shop in the Rue de la Paix. He was a jeweller and very wealthy. He was also a widower, and his family consisted of one daughter, Cécile, whom we saw in the first pages of this story, and who, at the time of the Lefarge tragedy, was just sixteen years of age.

It appears that Lefarge had many friends south of the Seine; he was well known in the Latin quarter as a patron of art and a merry companion when the fit took him, and altogether as a good sort.

He did not make these excursions into the Quartier Latin entirely for pleasure; he was a Norman, and had, even when

engaged in the business of pleasure, an eye to business.

The manufacturing of artistic jewellery stands amidst the highest of the fine arts, and amidst the Bohemians of the Boulevard St. Michel M. Lefarge had picked up more than one shabby individual with genius at his finger-tips, and the mutual acquaintanceship had helped to enrich considerably both the jeweller and the genius. Amongst these Bohemian acquaintances of Lefarge there was a man named Müller. Müller was a sculptor.

He was also without doubt a man of great genius. Without any doubt he was also a great drinker, though no man had ever seen him drunk.

He had exhibited several bronzes at the Salon; one, "A Fight between two Pterodactyls," was of a ferocity to make one shudder. All his work was stained by gloom and ferocity, yet all his work was the output of a master. So said M. Le Notre in his funeral oration at the grave of Müller, and the words, though spoken in the course of a funeral oration, were strictly the truth.

Well, Müller one day made the acquaintance

of M. Lefarge. The jeweller was not only wealthy but vain, and before long he commissioned Müller to execute a bust of himself (Lefarge) giving him numerous sittings for that purpose.

He also wished for a bust of his daughter, but Cécile Lefarge positively refused to sit. She had taken a dislike to the sculptor, one of those dislikes that are born of instinct.

One dark day in October, Lefarge drove up to the house where Müller lodged in the Rue de Turbigo. The concierge saw him enter. Müller was in, he lived on the top floor, and up the stairs went Lefarge to visit the sculptor.

An hour or so later he came down, carrying a black bag, got into his carriage, and drove home to the Rue de la Paix. Here he collected all his most valuable jewels. Jewels worth over a hundred thousand pounds. He drove in his carriage with them to the corner of the Rue d'Amsterdam; here he alighted. The coachman said he was carrying two bags: one the bag he had brought from Müller's house, the other the bag containing the jewels. He told the coachman to wait for him, turned the corner of the street, and was never seen again.

An hour later, in the Rue de Turbigo, Müller's landlady took some coffee up to him; she found his decapitated body lying on the floor. In the pocket of Müller's coat was a letter, the copy of a blackmailing letter written by Müller to Lefarge some months before. In the description of the dead body of Müller the existence was mentioned of two initials, "W. M." (the man's initials) tattooed in pale blue ink over the second right costal cartilage.

That no one had entered Müller's room after Lefarge had left it was indubitably proved by the concierge and several witnesses; proved so conclusively that there could not be any manner of doubt that Lefarge was the assassin. The collection of his jewels by Lefarge and his total effacement after the event sealed the matter.

Freyberger, having gone carefully through the reports, took a pen and began to draw up, for his own satisfaction, the points of similarity between the Lefarge and the Gyde case. Roughly, they were these: each assassin was a rich man, a man of pleasure and more or less dubious morals. Each victim was an artist.

Müller, the victim of Lefarge, had made a bust of his assassin.

Klein, the victim of Gyde, had made a bust of his assassin.

Upon the body of Müller was found the copy of an old blackmailing letter addressed to Lefarge.

In the room where Klein was found dead was found a copy of a blackmailing letter addressed to Gyde.

Upon each of the murdered men's chests were tattooed initials, exactly in the same place, over the second right costal cartilage.

A strange similarity bound the two cases together, but the strangest thing drawing the two cases together was the fact, the almost certain fact, that Müller and Klein were one and the same person.

The fact that both men were artists of a high type, that both men were blackmailers, that both men kept copies of old blackmailing letters in their own handwriting—a most extraordinary blunder to commit—that both men were decapitated in exactly the same manner, and that each man had tattooed, in exactly the same place on his breast, his own initials, all these facts crowned by the master fact that Klein had left behind him, in his rooms in Howland Street, a

portrait of himself with the name "Müller" partly erased from the back—all these facts, I repeat, made it quite clear to the mind of Freyberger that Klein and Müller were one and the same person. If this were so, Lefarge could not have murdered Müller, yet a frightful avalanche of evidence condemned him.

The evidence admitted of no cavil. No one else could have committed the crime. The assassination of Müller by Lefarge was even more conclusively proved than the assassination of Klein by Sir Anthony Gyde; for in the cottage on the fells another person might conceivably have been hidden at the time of the murder, but in the room in the Rue de Turbigo the evidence conclusively proved that no one could have been there at the critical moment but Lefarge and Müller.

The two cases, then, were connected together by many threads. At first sight the fact of this intimate connexion between the Lefarge and the Gyde case might seem to plunge the Gyde case into more profound darkness,to heap perplexity on perplexity.

But to Freyberger the discovery of this connexion was a huge step gained. Having verified

the similarity of the incidents in the two cases he did not bother about them for a moment, cast them aside, took a broad view of the whole business and arrived at the grand conclusion that the active criminal agent in the Lefarge case was also the active criminal agent in the Gyde case.

"Now, if this is so," argued Freyberger, "there are only four men to pick our criminal agent from. He must be either Lefarge, Müller, Klein or Gyde.

"Müller and Klein being the same person, the case is reduced to a case of three men from whom to pick our criminal.

"He cannot be Lefarge simply because Lefarge cannot be Gyde. He cannot be Gyde simply because Gyde cannot be Lefarge. It must then be Klein, alias Müller.

"If my premise is correct, that Klein and Müller are one and the same person, and that the active agent in both cases is the same man, then it is mathematically proved that the criminal is Klein.

"It might be suggested that Lefarge, after murdering Müller, escaped, changed his name, became Sir Anthony Gyde, and murdered Klein

in precisely the same manner as he murdered Müller, but that suggestion is at once beaten to death by a hundred bludgeons in the form of records.

"Leaving aside the fact that it would be impossible for Lefarge to masquerade as Gyde, we have the almost certain fact that Müller was never murdered at all.

"The case is quite clear in my own mind. Nothing will shake my opinion. I have the name of the man I am seeking for, I have his past history in part.

"He is undoubtedly the greatest criminal the world has ever seen, and I have not in the least fathomed his infernal method. The method by which he has, I fully believe, murdered two men, making the world believe that they have murdered him.

"What a strange thing is memory! I read the report of the Lefarge case six months ago and more. The facts were in my brain, I never dreamt of connecting them with the facts of the Gyde case until the words, 'two blue letters tattooed over the second right costal cartilage,' rang the bell and brought Recollection to her duty.

"Those two letters seemed at first to shatter my theory. Behold! on examination of what they recalled to my mind, they have been the means of making my theory absolutely perfect, extending it, and sweeping the real criminal towards my net.

"My theory, before those letters were made known to me, consisted of the idea that Gyde was innocent and that some one, presumably Klein, was guilty of the murder in the cottage.

"Now my theory is that Gyde is innocent and that Klein is *certainly* guilty not of the murder of some unknown man, but of Gyde.

"Yet the mystery still remains of the tattooing. How is it that the initials of Müller were tattooed on the breast of a corpse that could not have been the corpse of Müller? And the initials of Klein on a corpse that I am sure is not that of Klein? I cannot tell yet, but we shall see."

CHAPTER XXI

HE returned the big volume of press cuttings to their shelf, put on his hat and overcoat, lit a cigar, and left the house, taking his way to the Yard.

The Chief was away and Inspector Dennison was on duty.

"Well, Freyberger," said the Inspector, "and how's the case going on?"

"Oh, fairly well," said the other, "as far as I am concerned. I have struck, I believe, an important development. I want a man sent to Paris to-night, it's urgent, you can act in the absence of the Chief?"

"Yes."

"We have had that photograph of Müller reproduced?"

"Yes, that has been done."

"Well, I want a man to take it to Paris. I want careful inquiries to be made amongst the artists of the Latin Quarter as to whether that is the portrait of an artist named Müller, who

was murdered by a Monsieur Lefarge eight years ago. Here are the dates. I believe the thing will be easily verified. M. Le Notre, the sculptor, knew the man, or seems to have known him from the funeral oration he made at his graveside."

"What's the connexion?" asked Dennison.

"Deep and most important. It has cleared the Gyde case up a good deal in my mind, but I can't stop to tell you details, for it would take an hour. Will you send?"

"Yes," replied Dennison. He wrote out full instructions on a sheet of official paper, ordered a reprint of the Müller photograph to be brought him, ordered a certain officer to be summoned, and ten minutes later the man had departed for Victoria to catch the night mail to Paris.

"Now I'm going to ring them up, with your leave, and ask them some questions," said Freyberger, and five minutes later, with the receiver at his ear, he was in connexion with the Paris prefecture and the thin acerbitous voice of the night before was talking to him as though it had only ceased speaking a moment ago.

Dennison, listening, heard:

"I wish to make some inquiries as to the Lefarge case, November 9, 18—." "Yes." "The murder of the man Müller, Rue de Turbigo, No.—." "Yes." "Ah." "I wish to inquire as to whether any close relative of M. Lefarge is still living." "Yes." "The daughter you say?" "You have her address?" "Well, I wish her to come to London and bring with her all possible evidence of the case, also to find out the whereabouts of the bust executed by Müller of her father. To bring it with her if possible, and to communicate with us as to when she will arrive in London, and where we may see her as soon as possible. Thanks. We are sending an agent to you to-night with a photograph of a man named Müller. We wish it verified if possible, believing it to be the portrait of the Müller in the Lefarge case. He was well known in the Quartier Latin, and M. Le Notre may be able to identify. Thanks."

He hung up the receiver.

CHAPTER XXII

HELLIER'S chambers in Clifford's Inn were a part of the past. So was the staircase that led to them.

Generations of lawyers and rats and the fogs of two hundred or so Novembers had left their traces on wall and ceiling, on floors that sagged, and stairs that groaned, and doors that jammed, and chimneys that smoked.

On windy nights one heard all sorts of quaint arguments in the chimney and behind the wainscoting. Steps of defunct lawyers sounded in the passage outside, and sitting by the flickering firelight before the lamp was lit, you might, were you an imaginative man, have heard and seen pretty much anything your fancy willed.

The rooms had a smell of their own, quite peculiar to themselves and not unpleasant to an antiquarian mind.

A smell of must, or was it rats, or was it dead and gone lawyers? a faint, faint perfume,

which, if one could bottle, one might label "Clifford's Inn," just as M. Warrick labels his productions, "Ess Bouquet," or "New-mown Hay."

Hellier's sitting-room was a comfortable enough place despite the doors that would not open except when kicked, or at their own caprice; the skeleton-suggesting cupboards, the creaking floor and the sounds and scents of age.

There were plenty of books for one thing, a few good engravings, a comfortable easy chair, a hospitable-looking tobacco jar, a cigar cabinet not too big and not too small, a bright brass kettle on the hob, a canister of souchong in one of the musty-fusty smelling cupboards and a tantalus case on the table where Archbald's *Lunacy* reposed from its labours of teaching under a volume of Baudelaire.

Evidently it was the room of a barrister with tastes of his own.

Hellier, since leaving Boulogne some weeks ago, with the *dossier* of the Lefarge case in his pocket, had spent some days in Paris.

He had gone into the case with that thoroughness which a man only exhibits when urged by

either of the two great motive powers of life, ambition or love.

He had obtained an introduction to M. Hamard, he had interviewed the detectives who had been engaged on the case, he had pored over files of newspapers, and from M. Hamard, from the detectives, from the printed reports, he had obtained only the one dreary and reiterated statement: "M. Lefarge is guilty. The case admits of no other verdict. The thing is conclusively proved and the affair is closed."

He had returned to London and there again carefully sifted the evidence alone in his rooms in Clifford's Inn. Reviewing the whole matter, he could not but come to the conclusion arrived at by M. Hamard, the detectives and the newspapers. He could not but say to himself: "However much I wish to believe the contrary, I *must* believe what is the fact. M. Lefarge was guilty of as cruel and calculated and cold-blooded a murder as was ever committed by man."

This was bad, for his love for Cécile Lefarge had grown into a passion. One talks and laughs about heartache, but heartache is a pain beside which all other pains are trifles. To be pos-

sessed by the image of a woman, to love her and to know that she returns one's love, to be separated from her, to live without her and without assured hope of possessing her is the cruellest torture ever inflicted by an all-wise Providence on man.

Love is not blind, it confers the brightest and clearest vision to the person it possesses. Hellier knew quite well, knew for a certainty, that, till this cloud was cleared from her father's name, Cécile Lefarge would never marry.

She was the daughter of an assassin. He was quite prepared to forget the fact. She could never do so. It was a penalty laid upon her by fate and she would not palter with the fact, and unless her father's name was, by some miracle, cleared, she would go to her grave as she was, upheld by that iron determination which women alone possess when the passions are concerned and which is at once the most beautiful and the most terrible trait in women.

And the thing was hopeless, for M. Lefarge's name could never be cleared, so Hellier told himself, as he sat gloomily over the fire in his sitting-room at Clifford's Inn.

During his research in Paris he had come across several facts in connexion with the case that struck him especially.

One was that the head of the murdered man, Müller, had never been recovered.

Another was of a different nature. In a copy of the *Petit Journal,* dated some weeks after the day upon which the Lefarge tragedy had occurred, he had come across the details of a murder committed in the neighbourhood of Montmartre. The victim was an old man named Mesnier; he had been killed in a most brutal manner and for no object, apparently.

Mesnier lived in the Rue d'Antibes, a squalid street near the Moulin Rouge. A man had been seen leaving his room and, as Mesnier had no visitors as a rule, and the man had been seen leaving the room within a very short time after the assassination occurred, the man was presumably the criminal.

Alphonse Karr, the witness, an ex-waiter of the Théâtre-Concert Européen of Montmartre, said that he would have sworn that this man was Wilhelm Müller, whom he had often seen at the *Chat Noir,* only for the fact that he knew that Müller was dead.

This paragraph greatly interested Hellier and he searched on through the files of the *Petit Journal* in hopes of finding more details of the case. He found none.

But he found a headline that interested him in a copy of the *Petit Journal,* dated some days after the murder of Mesnier. It ran:

" Another Motiveless Murder."

It related to the murder of a woman named Sabatier, who had been found strangled in a field near Paris.

There was no possible motive for the crime, the woman had a purse in her hand containing twenty-five francs. The purse had not been taken, no violence had been done to her, if we except the fact that she had been strangled as though by some violent maniac.

" This case," said the *Petit Journal,* " recalls that of the old man, Mesnier, recorded by us some days since: in each the victim was strangled, evidently by the grip of a powerful hand; in each there was no motive for the crime, for it will be remembered that Mesnier had received his quarterly annuity and the money, a fairly large sum, was lying intact upon the table. "

Hellier, just by chance before dropping the file of the paper, turned a page, and came upon the detail of another crime.

A child had been strangled on the high road leading to Villeneuve St. George's, in the broad light of day.

A labourer had seen the occurrence from a distance. He saw the figure of a man, he saw the child. He thought the man was playing with the child. Then he saw the child lying on the high road and the man running away across a field. He could give no definite description of the man. He was about the middle height and dressed in dark clothes.

The case recalled the Sabatier case and the case of Mesnier.

Hellier searched on through the files of the paper. There was nothing more. The assassin had vanished and was never captured, no similar crimes were recorded. All these crimes had most probably been committed by the same man. They ceased suddenly and were not repeated; they had been committed for no apparent reason, most probably by some lunatic, whose mania was destruction.

What had become of the lunatic? Why had

this sudden mania seized him? Why had it suddenly ceased? These questions were never answered. The thing was one of those unsolved mysteries, with which the pigeon-holes of the prefecture are stocked.

Hellier searched no more. The fact that Karr, the ex-café waiter, had fancied a resemblance between the supposed assassin and Müller, the fact of the similarity between the three crimes lay in his memory, but they did not stir his imagination.

Even love could not hide from him the fact that Lefarge was guilty and Müller dead, and Cécile Lefarge the daughter of an assassin.

CHAPTER XXIII

ON the day after that upon which Freyberger had telephoned to the Paris police requesting a personal interview with Mademoiselle Lefarge, London awoke to find itself effaced by fog.

Mrs. Hussey, the old woman who stole Hellier's tea and whisky and coal, made his bed, lit his fire, and attended generally to his wants and discomforts, had set the breakfast things out for him, placed his eggs and bacon in the fender to keep warm, and his letters by his plate. Having attended to these duties she had departed, swallowed up in the fog.

There were three letters on the table. Two small bills and an invitation to a dance in Bayswater. A more depressing post could not have been invented for him.

He had hoped to find an envelope post-marked Boulogne-sur-Mer and addressed to him in a woman's characteristic hand. He had received no reply to his last letter, but there was the

chance that one might come by the second post.

London is a terrible place for the anxious heart expecting news by post. There are so many posts; every hour you hear the double knock at some one else's door, every hour you see the man in blue passing, the man who could bring you so much if the fates only willed.

The second post came and brought with it a circular.

Have you ever noticed in life the part played by the unexpected? You are looking forward to some pleasure, some journey, some meeting; you, perhaps, are full of doubt as to whether your finances will meet the occasion, whether the carriage will come at the proper time, whether the woman you are to meet will keep the appointment.

All your fears are groundless: the money arrives, the carriage is at the door, the lady is waiting for you, and you are just getting into the carriage with a bunch of violets in your hand and a fat cheque in your pocket, when a messenger arrives to say that your aunt is dying.

You had never thought of that. On the other

hand the cheque has not arrived, the carriage has not come, you are in despair, and Providence appears in the form of Jones, a debtor whom you had forgotten for years, now a millionaire back from South Africa.

Hellier was leaving his rooms with his overcoat tightly buttoned up, a muffler round his neck and a feeling of desolation at his heart, when, on the stairs, he knocked against a telegraph boy, took a telegram from him, opened it and read by the light of the gas jet on the lower landing:

"Boulogne-sur-Mer.

"DEAR FRIEND: We arrive London to-day, meet us Langham Hotel six o'clock; important.

CÉCILE LEFARGE."

As Hellier walked across the courtyard of Clifford's Inn with this missive in his pocket the sky above was sapphire blue, the sun was shining brightly, also trees were blooming around him and nightingales singing in their branches. At least, so it seemed to him till a collision with Mr. Crump, K. C., a portly gentleman, who was not in love, brought him to his senses.

He did not ask himself what could possibly have happened to bring Cécile to London. He only knew that she was coming, that she had telegraphed to him and that he would meet her at six. As if nature had suddenly grown kind as well as fate, towards noon the fog cleared away, the sun shone out and the light of a perfect spring day was cast upon the world.

At six o'clock to the minute he presented himself at the Langham, ascertained that Mademoiselle Lefarge and her aunt had arrived and were expecting him, and was shown to their private sitting-room.

CHAPTER XXIV

FREYBERGER, also, had received a telegram that morning, or at least, the Chief of the Criminal Investigation Department had received it and communicated its contents to him.

"You can take the case entirely into your own hands, Freyberger," he said. "You have certainly done well in it heretofore, the connexion between the two crimes seems to me almost made out; should the Paris people identify the portrait we have sent them as that of the supposedly murdered man, Müller, the connexion will be made certain. Your insight has been very praiseworthy, and if the portrait is identified we can at once place our finger upon the person who, if he is not the author of the crime we are investigating, is, at least, so bound up in it that his capture must place the whole matter in a clear light.

"But will we be any nearer to his arrest? You object to his portrait being published in the

papers, yet you know very well the value of that step.

"Take a big morning and evening paper; a portrait published in these papers is a portrait, so to speak, placarded on the sky. A million pair of eyes are at once placed at our service."

"Quite so, sir," replied Freyberger, "I am the last man to undervalue the power of the Press. I quite know that if we were to publish the portrait we should have half a million amateur detectives at our service in half a dozen hours. Unfortunately, it is my firm conviction that in an hour after publication, our man, who is now, I fancy, walking about the world catchable, in the pride of his infernal genius, in an hour, I repeat, he would be uncatchable. He would turn himself into air, into water, into smoke. He would become some one else. He is illusion materialized.

"Even if we circulate his portrait amidst the force, within a few hours some man answering his description is sure to be arrested, sure to be released, and the affair will get wind and our Jack-o'-lanthorn will know that some one, not answering the description of Gyde, is being sought for, and he will say to himself

'they have found out something, they suspect, perhaps they know,' and he will dive, efface himself, never be seen again.

"I believe the use of ordinary methods against this person will be of no avail. We must trust to chance. And I have a strange belief, rather a sort of instinct, that the chance will come to us through the Lefarge case."

He ceased, for at this moment a sergeant knocked at the door, bringing a broad sheet of paper on which was some writing.

He handed it to the Chief and withdrew. It was a message from Boulogne and read:

"Boulogne-sur-Mer.

"Have received communication through Hamard. Will be at the Langham Hotel this evening at seven, bringing all evidence with me. CÉCILE LEFARGE."

"The omen is good," said the Chief, with a slight smile.

Before Freyberger could reply the door opened and another officer appeared with a message. It was from the prefecture.

"Photograph sent by your agent identified as that of Wilhelm Müller, assassinated December 30, 18—, No. 110 Rue de Turbigo. Duplicate of photo has been in this office since the crime was committed.—LEGENDRE, Chief of Identification Bureau, Prefecture of Police."

The Chief's eyes sparkled for a moment with pleasure. The way in which Freyberger had connected and riveted the two cases, the manner in which he had now, with terrible and mathematical certainty, proved Müller, *alias* Kolbecker, *alias* Klein, the moving spirit in these two great tragedies, and almost to a certainty the criminal, since Lefarge could have no thinkable connexion with the Gyde case and Gyde no connexion with the Lefarge case; all this pleased his artistic instinct. He said nothing, but simply read the message, handed it to Freyberger, who read it in turn and gave it back.

"Thank you, sir," said Freyberger, "and now, if you will permit me, I will go home. Nothing of importance is likely to happen between now and seven o'clock. I have some pressing business to attend to."

"And what may that business be?" inquired the Chief.

"Sleep, sir. I have not closed my eyes for forty-eight hours."

"Go and attend to your business, then," replied the other, "and if anything of vital importance turns up, I will send for you. I am pleased with you, Freyberger, and with the way you have conducted this case. Go and dream you have caught this will-o'-the-wisp, and may your dream turn true."

"I never dream, sir," replied Freyberger, and, bidding the Chief good-morning, he departed.

CHAPTER XXV

HE returned to his rooms.

The man who would command events must be able to command sleep. This, at least, Freyberger was able to do. He cast himself upon his bed, closed his eyes and was immediately lost in oblivion.

At half-past four he awoke, made himself some coffee, lit a cigar and fell, for a moment, into meditation. There was one point wanting to him in the case before it stood absolutely four-square to his satisfaction.

That point was the proof that the bust of Sir Anthony Gyde was by the hand of the same sculptor as the bust of M. Lefarge.

It was more than probable that Mademoiselle Lefarge would bring with her to London this very material piece of evidence. It was in her possession he knew, for, in the newspaper accounts of the tragedy it was numbered amidst the *pièces de conviction,* and the statement was made that it had been returned to the daughter

of Lefarge, coupled with the statement that Mademoiselle Lefarge wept when it was returned to her and expressed her conviction of her father's innocence and her determination to devote her life to the task of clearing his name from the terrible stain upon it. Antonides alone would be able to decide the question of the artist, and at five Freyberger left his rooms and took his way to Old Compton Street.

He did not call at the Yard on his way, knowing quite well that if anything important had turned up in reference to the Gyde case, the Chief would have communicated with him immediately.

Antonides was in. He was eating a sausage roll behind his counter, or rather finishing it, when Freyberger entered. The old man was killing himself with indigestion. To save the price of a trustworthy assistant he looked after his business entirely himself, with the exception of what help a boy, hired at seven shillings a week, could give him. This meant that whenever he required a meal properly cooked he had to go to a café and lock the shop up till he returned. As this meant the possible loss of a customer, he was condemned to live on sardines and sausage

rolls, sandwiches, anything, in fact, that did not require cooking or service.

Of course he could have had dinner sent in from a café, but he would have had to eat it on the counter, for had he retired upstairs to devour it he would have been compelled to close the shop.

Not for one moment did he leave it open during his absence upstairs, save on very rare occasions, such as the morning before, when Freyberger, calling to inspect the bust, had found the boy taking down the shutters and the door open.

"Good-day, Mr. Freyberger," said the old man.

"Good-day," said Freyberger.

"And what can I do for you, Mr. Freyberger?" asked Antonides, "any more busts to restore?"

"Not to-day, thanks; I want your opinion on a work of art."

"Produce it."

"Do you think I carry it about with me in my pocket?"

"I have seen works of art produced from a pocket before now. I have seen a snuff-box,

worth a thousand guineas, and which I bought for—no matter."

"Well, this is not a snuff-box but a bust."

"Another bust!"

"Yes, another."

"The subject?"

"A man."

"The artist?"

"Unknown, but supposed to be the same who executed the bust of Sir Anthony Gyde."

"Ha! ha!"

"Could you tell if it were the same artist?"

"I could tell it in the dark by the touch of my fingers, could I not?"

"Well, I hope to show you it."

"You know my fee for examining works of art?"

"No."

"A guinea."

"You shall have it."

"At what hour will you bring it here?"

"That's just the point; the thing can't be brought here, you must go to see it."

"Where?"

"At the Langham Hotel."

"You know my fee for leaving my shop to inspect works of art?"

"No."

"Two guineas, Mr. Freyberger."

"You shall have them."

"And the cab fare?" shrieked Antonides, his face becoming pinched with excitement.

"And the cab fare."

"There and back?"

"Yes, there and back, anything else—mention it whilst we are about it, don't be bashful, drinks on the way and a red carpet on the steps when you get there."

"I never drink between meals. Three shillings is the cab fare. I never cheat my customers, nor do I allow cabmen to cheat me. At what hour shall I be at the Langham Hotel?"

"Oh, about half-past seven."

"And the bust. If it is not asking an impertinent question, where is it coming from?"

"Paris."

"Ah!"

"By the way."

"Yes."

"Have you ever heard of an artist and sculptor named Wilhelm Müller?"

"Wilhelm Müller, a sculptor?"

"Yes."

"Murdered eight years ago?"

"Yes."

"By a M. ——"

"Lefarge."

"Yes, yes, that is the name. Oh, yes, I remember Müller. I only saw him once about nine years ago; I clearly recollect him for the fact of his murder, which I read of in the papers shortly after, impressed our meeting upon me. It was at the *Chat Noir*. Oh, yes, I remember Wilhelm Müller very well indeed."

"You are a judge of men."

"I am a judge of art primarily; modern man is mainly a production of art, not of nature. Yes, I am a judge of men."

"What was your opinion of Müller?"

"You know my fee for examining and giving my opinion on works of art."

"Yes; here, take a cigar and give me your opinion on Müller."

"As a work of art or nature?"

"You said modern man was a work of art."

"I said, mainly a work of art; there is a strong substratum of nature in some men."

"Well, I want your opinion on Müller, both as a work of art and a work of nature; cast some light on him for me out of your intelligence."

"Give me a match."

"There you are."

"Thank you. As an artistic production, Müller was not so bad, for he managed fairly well to conceal from his fellow-men what nature had made him?"

"And what had nature made him."

"A madman."

"A madman?"

"Yes, and yet he was sane."

"That sounds like a paradox."

"Man is a paradox. I know twenty men in London who are as mad as hatters, yet they are sane for all practical purposes."

"Could you fancy Müller committing a murder?"

"Easily. He was of the intellectual criminal type."

"Yet he was a great artist."

"Though I have never seen any of his work——"

"Pardon me, you have, for that bust of Sir

Anthony Gyde's was, I believe, from his chisel."

"Though I had never seen any of his work, judging from my recollection of the man, I would say he was a great genius. He had the brilliancy of eye, the concentration of gaze, which one rarely meets with in commonplace people, and yet those eyes would, so to speak, fall apart, the concentration relax, the gaze become turned inward. Then it was that the essential madness of the man became visible to the man who could see. How many men of your acquaintance can see, Mr. Freyberger?"

Freyberger laughed and turned to leave the shop.

"Well," he said, "seven-thirty at the Langham. Be sure you are there and ask for Mademoiselle Lefarge."

CHAPTER XXVI

AT seven o'clock precisely Freyberger drove up to the Langham.

Mademoiselle Lefarge had given instructions that anyone who called was to be shown up.

Freyberger followed a waiter up the softly carpeted stairs; at the door of a room on the first landing the man stopped.

"Whom shall I say, sir?"

"Mr. Gustave Freyberger."

The waiter opened the door and the detective found himself in the presence of three people.

An old lady with white hair, a young woman whom he recognized by instinct as Mademoiselle Lefarge, and a man of about thirty or perhaps thirty-five, clean-shaved, English-looking, and with the stamp of a barrister.

The detective's quick eye and even quicker brain took in the room and its occupants at a glance.

In a moment he comprehended the status of the two women before him, but the man puzzled him.

The women were French to their finger-tips, but the man was English.

Needless to say the man was Hellier.

Cécile Lefarge gazed at the new-comer for a moment and then advanced, with hand outstretched, in such a kindly and frank manner as quite to captivate even the unemotional Freyberger.

"I need not ask you," she said, "for I am quite sure you are the gentleman mentioned by M. Hamard as having telegraphed to Paris for an interview with me. I am Cécile Lefarge."

"Mademoiselle," replied the detective, with a charming modesty that was half false, "the communication to M. Hamard came from the Chief of the Criminal Investigation Department of Scotland Yard. I am but the humble instrument deputed by him to inquire into a certain case. A crime has been committed in England. In the investigation of the matter, I, by a strange chance, came upon the records of a crime committed in Paris——"

"Eight years ago."

"Pardon me, mademoiselle, eight years and five months ago."

"You are exact."

"I am exact, but before I proceed I must ask you to excuse me. This is an important matter. In speaking of it I wish to be sure of whom I am addressing. You are Madamoiselle Lefarge, this lady——"

"Is my aunt, Madame de Warens."

"Thank you, and this gentleman?"

Cécile Lefarge blushed slightly. "He is our very good friend, Mr. Hellier."

Hellier produced his visiting card and handed it to Freyberger.

"That is my name and address," said he. "I assure you that anything you say before me will not pass beyond me. Mademoiselle Lefarge has entrusted me with the painful details of the case that occurred in Paris eight years ago, and I have made investigations myself in the matter. I have spent some time in Paris studying the reports of the case, and I may be able to assist you in an humble way, if my assistance would not be out of place."

Freyberger bowed very stiffly. He had a horror of the amateur detective; the Gyde case was his own especial problem, he wished for no help in its solution.

"Thank you," he said. Then turning to Madamoiselle Lefarge:

"I like to be always perfectly frank. I have brought you a long journey, my message was urgent, yet I can give you no word of hope on the question that has troubled your heart for eight years."

"Hope!"

"My meaning is this: I can give you no hope that M. Lefarge is alive."

"Alive! Ah, no! He is dead, my dear father is dead, some instinct has long told me that; all I hope for is revenge."

"I may give you that," said Freyberger quite simply.

They were standing opposite to one another. Mademoiselle Lefarge sank down on a fauteuil near by and motioned the detective to take a chair.

"I must tell you first," said he, taking a seat close by her, "that a terrible crime has been committed in England, a crime almost exactly similar to that which was committed in the Rue de Turbigo eight years ago."

"Ah!"

"We are investigating that crime, we believe

the active agent in it to be the active agent in the crime of the Rue de Turbigo. If we can prove this incontrovertibly by the capture of the active agent for whom we are seeking, your father's name will be quite cleared of any imputation."

Cécile Lefarge sighed deeply. She sat with her hands clasped across one knee and her eyes fixed upon the man before her.

She divined, in this plain, clean-shaved, fresh-coloured and youngish-looking man, whose face might have been that of a café waiter, whose manner was yet so calm and authoritative and assured, and whose eye was so full of steadfastness and energy, she divined in this person the man for whom she had been seeking for years—her avenger.

"Go on, please," she said.

"I must first," said Freyberger, taking a parcel from his pocket, "ask you to look at this."

He handed a photograph to the girl.

She looked at it and gave a short, sharp cry, as though some one had struck her.

"Müller!" she said, holding the thing away from her with a gesture of terror.

Freyberger took it and replaced it in his pocket after Hellier had glanced at it.

"You recognize it as the portrait——"

"Of the man who executed the bust of my father. Oh, yes, indeed, I recognize it. His face is burnt upon my brain. Were I to live a thousand years, it would be there still."

"Now," said Freyberger, "I do not wish to pain you, yet I must say some unpleasant things. You know that in the eyes of the world at the time of this affair, M. Lefarge appeared guilty."

"Alas!" said she, "in the eyes of the world my dear father must appear as guilty as he did then."

"You know the terrible mass of evidence that was produced against him?"

"Yes."

"You have weighed it logically yourself?"

"Yes."

"Have you ever believed your father to have been guilty of the crime imputed to him?"

"Never."

"Have you any special reason for this disbelief?"

"No."

"Yet——"

"Yet I know him to have been innocent. Ah, M. Freyberger! logic is not everything in this world; instinct with some people counts for much more. I know my dear father to have been innocent, and you ask me how I know it. I can only answer, 'How do I know that the sun shines?' The thing is plain before me, and we will not speak of it again."

"We will speak, then, of this man, Müller. He impressed you."

She looked around as if seeking for a metaphor.

"He impressed me with horror, he filled me with the terror of a nightmare."

"You saw him several times?"

"Yes, my dear father brought him to our house. My father was so good, so pleasant, so genial, he saw no harm in anyone. If a man were only clever, that was enough for him. Many an artist who is now well-to-do in the world owes everything to the help received from him."

Freyberger had been studying Mademoiselle Lefarge from the first moment of his entering

the room. This was no woman of the ordinary type.

This was an individual of spirit and sense and intellect, who had been studying the Lefarge case for eight years. He determined to put the whole matter of the Gyde case before her and its connexion with the case of Lefarge.

This he did in the space of ten minutes, clearly and concisely and with that precision that never misses a necessary or includes an unnecessary word.

"If what you have told me is correct," said Mademoiselle Lefarge, when he had finished, "it only confirms my belief that Müller by some horrible alchemy, known only to himself, destroyed my father both in body and reputation, just as he has destroyed Sir Anthony Gyde."

"That, too, is my belief," said Hellier, who had been listening, amazed at the tale of Freyberger, and full of admiration at his process of reasoning.

"Now," said the detective, "have you the bust this man executed of M. Lefarge?"

"Yes," replied Cécile, "I have it in the next

room; I brought it with me to-day, hoping it might be of use."

Freyberger looked at her with admiration.

"It will be of great use, and I must thank you for bringing it. I would like to see it and to show it to a friend whom I expect here shortly. He is a Greek who has reconstructed the Gyde bust, and his opinion is necessary to me in the case."

Mademoiselle Lefarge passed into an adjoining room, from which she presently emerged carrying something in her arms, something wrapped in a white cloth.

She placed this object on a table and, removing the cloth, exposed the bust of M. Lefarge, which we have already seen.

Freyberger examined the thing attentively, murmuring to himself as he did. Mademoiselle Lefarge, watching him narrowly, imagined that he seemed pleased.

"Well," she said at last, "do you think it will be of service to you in your investigations? What do you think of it?"

"Ah, mademoiselle," he replied, "my opinion on a work of art is, perhaps, of no great value, and for that reason I have sent for

a friend who is a magician where these matters are concerned, but," looking at his watch, "he is late, this magician."

Scarcely had he spoken when a knock came to the door and a waiter appeared bearing a salver, on which reposed a filthy-looking visiting card.

Cécile took the thing, on which was scrawled:

"I. Antonides, art dealer, 1006 Old Compton Street."

"The gentleman is outside, miss," said the waiter, whose cast-iron face was struggling with a grin and conquering it.

"Show him in," said Cécile, and I. Antonides entered.

Dressed in a shabby old fur-lined coat, from which half the buttons were gone, and holding a shabby old silk hat in one hand he stood for a moment in the doorway, blinking, and then, catching sight of Freyberger, he beckoned.

Freyberger went to him and Antonides, catching him by the lapel, whispered, "A word in your ear, Mr. Freyberger."

"Well, what is it?" asked the detective, following the old man into the corridor.

"Am I dealing in this matter with you, or the young woman?"

"I suppose by the young woman you mean Mademoiselle Lefarge?"

"Yes."

"Well, you are dealing with me. Why do you ask?"

"Only this," said Antonides, who, from one brief glimpse, had summed up the financial position of this girl, who was able to afford a private suite of rooms on the first floor of the Langham.

"It's nothing to you, here or there. A pound or two in my pocket, so long as it doesn't come out of your pocket, won't make her pocket any the lighter. Mr. Freyberger, consider our bargain off, like a good friend, and let me do the skinning."

"Now look here," said Freyberger; "you bargained to come here and view the thing for two pounds."

"Guineas."

"And the cab fare, that's what you'll get and not a penny more. Skinning, indeed! Do you take me for an—art dealer? See here, I have the money for you: here's two pounds,

here's two shillings, and what's the cab fare?"

"Five."

"Three, you mean; anyhow, here's five. What a funny man you are."

"I am never funny in business, but in return for your compliment, I will give you a piece of advice—never, never stir a foot in business without settling your terms in advance. Once I lost eight shillings and a half-penny, the single fare to Leicester, by omitting to carry out that precept. It was seven years ago, Mr. Freyberger, seven years, and I have never got that eight and a halfpenny back from the world yet, and never will. Now to our consultation."

They returned to the sitting-room. Freyberger introduced the old man in a word or two and then pointed to the bust.

The Greek took a spectacle case from his pocket, drew forth a pair of steel-rimmed spectacles and adjusted them upon his nose. Then he examined the bust attentively.

"Well?" asked Freyberger.

"Well," answered the other, quite regardless of the other people present. "Where are your eyes? Could you not see that this bust is,

from an artistic point of view, the twin brother of that which I repaired for you?"

"I was sure of it," said Freyberger.

"Then why did you ask my opinion?"

"Because I wanted to make doubly sure."

"Well, you have done so," said Antonides, taking his spectacles off and replacing them in his pocket. "You may take my word for it that the man who executed this bust was also the author of that admirable piece of work which some Philistine smashed with his coal hammer."

Antonides bowed slightly to the ladies, seized his old hat, which he had placed on a chair, and, escorted by Freyberger, left the room.

When Freyberger returned, Mademoiselle Lefarge was still standing in exactly the same place where she had stood whilst the old man was giving his opinion on the bust.

Hellier was still seated in the background; he had not spoken a word, content to listen and leave the case entirely in the capable hands of the detective.

The girl took a seat and motioned Freyberger to do the same.

He took the chair which she had pointed out,

then he sat for a moment in thought. At last he said.

"You have told me everything that you know?"

"Yes."

"Well, I want you to tell me something more. I want you to tell me, more precisely, what you think."

She looked puzzled.

"Your knowledge of the facts of this case," said he, "does not, perhaps, exceed my own. Your memory may not be able to cast new light on the matter, but your imagination may. You have pondered over it, you have dreamt of it; for eight years and more it has been with you. What does your imagination say? What have you fancied about it?"

"I have fancied this," said she, "or rather, I have been assured of this. That whoever was murdered in the Rue de Turbigo, it was not Müller. I know all the evidence, and of the tattooed marks upon the body. The two letters 'W. M.,' which were his initials. But might they not have been the initials of some other man? No one gave evidence to say that such marks had ever been seen upon Müller. No

matter. I believe that Müller was *not* murdered; I believe that Müller was the assassin of whoever *was* murdered, and I have felt that he was such a terrible man that he was sure to repeat his crime, murder some one else, and probably get caught. God help me! I have hoped so. For years it has been my hope that this demon might act again as he acted in the Rue de Turbigo, and fall into the hands of justice, just as a tiger who eats men returns to his feeding place and falls into the hands of the hunters.

"Was my belief correct? Look at the case of Sir Anthony Gyde, of which you told us tonight."

"Your belief was, I am convinced, correct," answered Freyberger.

"I believe," went on Mademoiselle Lefarge, speaking as if under the influence of an inspiration, "that this man has not limited his hand to Sir Anthony Gyde, I believe that he has committed many murders. He is a *murderer.* I can fancy him strangling a fellow creature from pure hatred and the lust of blood or money."

"Ah! Good heavens!" cried Hellier, striking himself on the forehead.

Every one turned towards him.

"What is it?" asked the girl.

"I have been a fool, forgive me. I remember now; listen to me."

"Yes, yes."

"I undertook to investigate this case. I went to Paris, I saw every one who could in the least throw light on it, I went into all the evidence. I said to myself, the case is hopeless; forgive me for having said this even to myself. Well, one day, by chance, in an old file of the *Petit Journal,* I saw the case of an old man named Mesnier; he had been strangled for no apparent reason, and an important witness said that he had seen a man leaving Mesnier's room shortly after the time the tragedy must have taken place, and he said that he would have sworn that this man was Müller, only for the fact that Müller was known to be dead."

"Ah, ah!" said Freyberger, who was listening intently. "How long after the Lefarge affair was this?"

"A few days. Then a few days later a woman was strangled in a field for no apparent motive save murder, and a few days later a

child was also killed upon the high road near Paris in a similar manner. I read these things, but, though they made an impression upon me, I said to myself, Müller is dead, they can have no relationship to the crime in the Rue de Turbigo. Now I have heard of the Gyde case, it proves that Müller is still alive, and now I feel convinced that these crimes were committed by this demon. Can you forgive me, my friend, for having for a moment doubted the innocence of your father?"

"There is nothing to forgive," said the girl, gazing at the young man with an expression that spoke volumes of her feelings towards him, "and if there were I would forgive you a hundred times, for you have struggled against the disbelief caused by terrible and crushing evidence. What you say proves to me again that this man is alive; but alas! of what use to us can these other crimes be? He was not caught, they occurred years ago and can give justice no thread."

Freyberger did not seem to fall in with this opinion. He had risen from his chair and was pacing up and down, a sure sign that he was deeply excited or disturbed.

"You are sure of what you say?" he said, suddenly turning on Hellier.

"Certain."

"You saw these crimes reported in the *Petit Journal?*"

"Yes."

"Have you files of the papers?"

"No. I read it in Paris. I can supply you with the dates."

"No use; I don't want to know details. Simply the fact that these crimes were committed suffices me."

"Do you think the fact will be of use to you?" asked the girl.

Freyberger laughed hoarsely. He had let his excitement get away with him. In a flash he had seen the means and the method of laying his hand upon the man he wanted. This was what he had been waiting for, just this accidental sidelight. "Chance will give him to us," he had told the Chief of the Criminal Investigation Department, and now he felt that the chance had come. But he was not going to show his hand, especially before Hellier. He wanted to keep the Gyde case to himself till it was completed, just as a sculptor

keeps a statue from view till the moment of unveiling.

"It may and it may not," he replied. "And now, mademoiselle, I will take leave of you. There is much work to be done and I am required elsewhere. I will keep you informed of our progress; that is to say, as far as it is in my power. You are staying at the hotel?"

"Yes, for some time."

"Thank you; good-evening." He bowed to old Madame de Warens, who had been a somewhat unintelligent spectator of all that had passed; he gave a slight, stiff bow to Hellier and left the room.

Hellier rose to his feet. "I must speak to that man," he said, taking Cécile Lefarge's hand in both his. "I must catch him before he leaves the hotel. May I see you to-morrow?"

"Yes, come early."

He left the room with something in his hand. It was a small bunch of violets she had taken from her breast.

CHAPTER XXVII

IN the entrance hall of the Langham Freyberger drew a long, black, poisonous-looking cheroot from his pocket and lit it.

Then he buttoned his overcoat and prepared to depart. He felt jubilant. The whole of the pieces of the puzzle had fallen into their places under the influence of his intellect, and now this new sidelight had pointed at the possible road to the absolute and final move, which would allow him to place his hand upon the creator of the puzzle, and say: "You are mine."

He was just going down the steps when a voice from behind said, "Excuse me."

He turned and saw Hellier.

"I would like a moment's conversation with you," said the barrister.

"Certainly, certainly," said the other, in a not too amiable voice. "What can I do for you?"

"If you will allow me to walk a few hundred yards with you, I will explain myself. Please

don't think I want to interfere in this case, but I have sworn to give all the help in my power, and I think I may be able to make a suggestion to you that may be useful."

"Humph!"

"I have made a special study of forensic medicine and criminology, and this has occurred to me.

"I will tell you what I think in a few words. This Müller accomplished a deeply reasoned out and intricate crime in Paris eight years ago. Well, having done that, his reason withdrew itself, exhausted possibly, but the lust for killing excited by the crime remained and grew and had to be satisfied. He strangled three people.

"We know of lots of cases where a lunatic has a grudge against the whole female or male sex, and kills for the pleasure of killing. It is rarer for a man of this description to have a grudge against the whole of humanity and to murder indiscriminately, but it occurs.

"We find these people perfectly sane in other ways; they are just tigers let loose when their reason becomes weakened.

"So we have Müller, a man of profound

intellect, suddenly, under the thirst of blood, turned into a killing machine. He kills three people, no more, for the fit passes. He is gorged for years, till he commits a new murder and the fit returns."

"Proceed," said Freyberger, in a hard voice; for what Hellier had just said was the very thing he had been thinking to himself.

"Well, as Müller did eight years ago, so, in all probability, he will do again. He has murdered a man in Cumberland. The thirst for blood, or rather human life, will most probably seize him again. And all you have to do to catch him is to wait. I will wager my reputation that this beast will repeat his actions like some horrible automaton, and that within the next few days you will have a case of motiveless murder to investigate, and that if you catch the criminal it will be Müller."

Freyberger did not reply. What Hellier had just said was exactly what he (Freyberger) had been thinking.

It is not pleasant to find one's astuteness matched. He had put all his energy and mind into the Gyde case, and here was a stranger pointing out to him the course to take for the

completion of the affair; and, worst of all, the right course.

He quite forgot that it was due to Hellier's researches that these subsidiary crimes had been connected with the Lefarge case.

He was, in fact, human, and he was jealous.

"What you have said," he replied, "may have something in it."

"I think, myself, it may have a good deal in it," replied Hellier, nettled somewhat at the other's assumed indifference and the chilliness of his tone.

"Well," said Freyberger, "the matter is in our hands, and you may be sure everything will be done that is needful. We do not, as a rule, require outside help or suggestions in our work. I wish you good night."

"That's the professional detective all over," thought Hellier, as he watched the departing figure of Freyberger. "They work in one set groove, they have ideas handed down from generation to generation. I was amazed at this man's perspicuity at first, and now I find him just one of a class. Well, if he doesn't see much in my idea I do, and I will keep my eyes open, and if I see a chance I will profit by it."

CHAPTER XXVIII

IF Hellier could only have seen into the consciousness of our friend Freyberger, he would have admitted that the latter, although a professional detective, had an open mind, and was not entirely bound up in self-conceit.

Freyberger, as in duty bound, took a cab and made as fast as a London cab-horse could carry him, through London traffic, towards the Yard.

At the Yard the Chief was just getting into his motor-car. When he saw Freyberger he beckoned to him.

"Come with me," he said, "I am going on a case."

Freyberger knew what that meant.

Some crime of extra magnitude had just taken place.

When the Chief went in person like this it meant big things.

He got into the *tonneau* without enthusiasm, for he had so much on his mind that he did not relish the prospect of an additional burden, and the car started.

It passed up Regent Street and then up Oxford Street in the direction of the Marble Arch, and straight on towards Notting Hill Gate. At Notting Hill Gate it turned down Silver Street, and turning the corner into High Street, Kensington, headed for Hammersmith.

It had not gone more than a couple of hundred yards in this direction when it slowed, and a mounted constable, who had been slowly patrolling the street, turned his horse, and putting it to the trot led the way, turning sharply to the right from the High Street up St. James's Road.

St. James's Road, not far from the grounds surrounding Holland House, has a touch of the provincial town suburb about it; every house has a garden in front of it, and every garden has one or more trees. It is a good middle-class neighbourhood; a few of the houses are let out in furnished apartments, though no bill or sign indicates the fact, but the majority of the inhabitants are of the professional or retired business class.

About the middle of the road, by the right-hand kerb, a crowd of people could be made out.

The car slowed down and stopped a few yards

from the crowd, the Chief and Freyberger alighted, and, led by a constable, passed through the throng up a garden path.

The hall door, at which they knocked, was opened by a constable.

"You have the body here?" asked the Chief.

"Yes, sir," replied the man, saluting.

"Bring us to it."

The constable opened a door on the right of the passage, disclosing a comfortably furnished sitting-room. A man was standing with his back to the mantelpiece. It did not require the tall hat, standing on the table with the stethoscope beside it, to indicate his profession. A middle-aged woman, evidently recovering from some great agitation, was standing by the table, and on the floor lay something covered with a sheet.

"Shut the door," said the Chief to the constable; then turning to the man:

"You are a doctor?"

"Yes," replied the other. "I was summoned nearly an hour ago, and have waited at the request of the police till your arrival. Life was extinct when I came."

"Thank you," said the Chief. "Sit down,

Freyberger. A pen, ink and paper, please. Thanks." Then to the constable, "Were you the officer called?"

"I was called at ten-fifteen, being on point duty, arrived to find deceased lying on the pavement in front of his house. He was black in the face; and, thinking it was a case of a fit, I unbuttoned his collar and attempted artificial respiration on the pavement, as he lay, but without success. This lady, here, was standing by the corpse; there was also a crowd of some ten or twelve people.

"This lady told me deceased lodged with her and that she believed he had been murdered.

"I had him conveyed into this room, sending messengers for a doctor, and to the High Street, Kensington, Police Station. I again attempted artificial respiration, and was so engaged when this gentleman arrived."

"That all?"

"Yes, sir."

"Thanks. Now, sir," turning to the doctor, "may I ask you just to state the facts within your knowledge?"

"I was called at ten-thirty, about. I live in the High Street. My name's Mason. I found

deceased here upon the floor and the constable attempting artificial respiration. Life was extinct."

"How long had the man been dead?"

"A very short time; possibly not more than half an hour, perhaps less."

"Cause of death?"

"Strangulation. The man has been, in my opinion, garrotted, seized from behind by the throat and literally strangled. The thyroid cartilage has been broken, and there are the marks of fingers upon the skin of the neck."

"No other marks or wounds?"

"I have found no other."

"Thanks. Constable, remove the sheet."

The officer stripped away the sheet, revealing a terrible spectacle. Upon the floor lay the body of a middle-aged man, judging from the scanty hair streaked with grey; the face was of a dull purple, the tongue and eyes were protruding.

The body was well dressed in a frock coat and grey pepper-and-salt-coloured trousers.

"Had he been robbed?" asked the Chief of the constable.

"No, sir; the watch and chain, valuable ones

evidently, were intact, also the money in his pockets."

"Now," said the Chief, turning to the woman, "what do you know about it?"

She told her tale in a broken voice.

Deceased had lodged with her for some years. His name was Goldberg, a retired City man and well-to-do. Always of an evening he went out before retiring to rest, and took a short walk up and down the road, rarely being absent more than ten minutes.

This evening he had gone out as usual. She was in the front bedroom upstairs, closing the window and about to pull down the blind, when she heard a stifled cry from the street, and looking out, saw two men struggling on the pavement just before the garden gate.

She could not tell in the least what the men were like, for the light was very indistinct.

She ran downstairs. Her husband was out, and she had no one in the house with her.

She put the hall door on the chain and, opening it as far as possible with the chain on, she peeped through the opening.

She saw a dark form on the pavement beyond the garden gate. It did not move.

There was no sound to be heard, and plucking up courage after a while, she opened the hall door and came down the garden path towards the gate.

Mr. Goldberg was lying on the pavement, "all of a heap." She screamed, and a woman from over the way came across the road. The woman ran into the High Street for assistance, and a policeman came. The woman across the way had seen nothing of the two men or the struggle.

"Had Mr. Goldberg any enemies, to your knowledge?"

"No, sir; he was the best and kindest of men."

"Had he any relatives?"

"No, sir; only a brother in Australia."

"Has he heard lately from his brother, do you know?"

"Yes, sir; he had a letter only yesterday."

"Well, Freyberger," said the Chief, "have you any questions to ask?"

"None, sir; but, if you will permit me, I will have that crowd cleared away from the street outside. I would like to examine the road."

"How many men have you outside?" asked the Chief of the constable.

"Four, sir."

"Go and clear the crowd away. Send for assistance, if necessary."

"If you will permit me, sir," said Freyberger, "I will go with the constable."

"Do so; I will wait here until your return."

Freyberger left the room. He did not return for some twenty minutes.

"Well?" asked the Chief, when he returned.

"I would like to have a moment's conversation with you in private, sir."

The doctor had already gone, the Chief asked the landlady to withdraw, and Freyberger and he found themselves alone in the room with the corpse.

"I have found nothing, sir," said Freyberger, "I went as a matter of routine. I have, of course, searched narrowly the pavement, the gutter and the road for any possible trace, any dropped article that might possibly furnish a clue. I did not expect to find anything."

"Why?"

"Because, sir, the man who has murdered

Mr. Goldberg is not a man to leave clues behind him."

"You know him, then?"

"I believe I do, sir. I believe the man who has just committed this crime is no other than Klein, *alias* Kolbecker, *alias* Müller."

The Chief made an impatient movement.

"You must have that man on your brain," said he. "What on earth connexion can you make between this and the Gyde case?"

"One moment, sir; you have had a large experience. Have you ever come across an exactly similar case to this, that is to say, the case of a harmless, elderly gentleman strangled openly in the street for no apparent reason?"

"No, I can recall no such case."

"The fact of strangulation alone marks it as a crime by itself. Murderers use every sort of weapon save their own hands.

"The hand, as a rule, is the weapon of the madman."

"Yes?"

"Well, sir, I will tell you, in a few words, why I connect this crime with the case of Sir Anthony Gyde."

He then detailed the facts he had learned

about the crimes that had followed the murder in the Rue de Turbigo.

The Chief listened attentively.

"So you think—?" he said.

"I think, sir, that the ravening beast roused in Klein's brain by the murder committed in Cumberland is now beginning to show itself by its actions. I think if we do not seize Klein over this business another murder of the same sort is sure to occur. Maybe, several more. Our main hope is to track him now. If we miss him now, we will have several more chances, but that will mean several more victims. With your permission, I will not return with you to the Yard to-night, I will remain in this neighbourhood. There is a strong possibility that he has a den somewhere round here, in the shape of a furnished room. I wish to remain about the spot. I will take a room here for the night, if the woman of the house will let me have one. I must get a list of all known lodging-houses in the neighbourhood, and I must be on the spot here early in the morning."

"Very well," replied the Chief; "act as you think fit. I give you a free hand in the matter."

Freyberger accompanied him outside. He

got into the motor-car and drove off, and the detective was returning to the house when a stranger, who had just come up, accosted him.

"I am on the General Press Association," said the stranger; "you are, I believe, Inspector Freyberger. Can you give me any details of the crime just committed?"

"Certainly," replied Freyberger, with suspicious alacrity. He gave a short account of the murder, which the pressman entered eagerly in his notebook.

"Any details known as to the appearance of the murderer?" asked the representative of the General Press Association.

"The landlady says that, as far as she could see, the assailant was a tall man with a black beard," replied Freyberger.

"Thanks," replied the other, "good night." He hurried off jubilantly to get his copy in and Freyberger went up the garden path to the house.

"When Klein reads that description of himself in the morning papers," said Freyberger, to himself, "he will smile, if that face could ever smile. It will make him feel even more secure than if the truth were told that the land-

lady could not describe the assassin at all. Of course, the coroner's inquest will contradict what I have said. Well, we must get hold of the reporter at the inquest and doctor his account. Damn the Press! for one criminal it catches it assists in the escape of twenty.

"Now, what will Klein do first thing tomorrow morning? He will most possibly buy a newspaper, therefore every newspaper shop in the neighbourhood must be watched.

"I say, most possibly. I would have said, most probably, were Klein an ordinary criminal.

"However, we must leave no stone unturned."

CHAPTER XXIX

WHEN Hellier opened his paper next morning, he read the following headlines:

TERRIBLE MURDER IN KENSINGTON!
CITY MAN ASSASSINATED UPON HIS OWN DOORSTEP!
CLUE TO THE MURDERER!

He read the report hurriedly through, then he read it slowly, dwelling on all the details.

After his prediction to Freyberger the night before, this thing came horribly pat; it had been happening, perhaps, just as he was talking to the detective.

He felt the triumph of the man who has prophesied and whose prophecy has come true.

The only thing that troubled him was the description of the murderer: "Tall man, with black beard."

Klein was clean shaven and of middle height; but the disguise of a beard was the commonest disguise of all; and as for the height, the

assassin was seen in semi-darkness, which enlarges, and the observer was a frightened woman.

Hellier well knew the magnifying effect of terror.

Yes, without doubt, this was the expected crime. Just as an astronomer predicts the appearance of a comet, he had predicted the commission of this crime.

The fact of strangulation clinched the matter.

He breakfasted hurriedly, debating in his own mind as to what course he would pursue.

There is nothing which blinds the intellect more than a pre-conceived idea. Hellier's opinion of the professional detective was as favourable as most people's, but he held the idea, rightly or wrongly, that the professional detective was a person of machine-made methods. Freyberger was a professional detective.

Little knowing that Freyberger was at the moment hot on the trail of the murderer of Mr. Goldberg, the idea came to him of calling at the Yard and attempting to interview Freyberger.

He dismissed the idea almost as soon as it was conceived, for, whatever he knew of detec-

tives, he had sufficient knowledge of men to understand that the little German would brook no interference, and take advice more as a personal insult than as a compliment.

He determined to act on his own initiative, to find out what he could for himself; but first he had to call upon Mademoiselle Lefarge.

He arrived at the Langham about ten o'clock.

His interview with her did not last more than twenty minutes. He said nothing of the murder of Mr. Goldberg; the thing was such a horrible basis to build hope upon that he shrank from mentioning it.

Besides, he had other things to talk of.

Cecile Lefarge, in Boulogne, even at their first meeting, had been attracted by Hellier. When he left Boulogne, she had told herself that she cared very much for him, telling herself at the same time that it was useless, that love for her was not. She told herself this with a certain philosophic calmness.

Meanwhile, her love for him was growing. The philosophic calmness vanished and gave place to pain, a dull, aching pain, almost physical.

A pain that only Hellier could relieve. He, in London, was suffering from an exactly similar pain, that only she could relieve, which condition, affecting two people at the same time, constitutes the disease—love.

He left the Langham about half-past ten, and, taking a cab, drove in the direction of Kensington.

He wished to see the place of the tragedy; he had no earthly idea of what he should do when he got there, he had only the fixed determination to do something. Often, when we have no idea of what we are going to do, a whole host of ideas on the subject in question are forming themselves in the sub-conscious part of our brains.

He dismissed the cab in the High Street and took his way on foot to St. James's Road.

A small crowd, constantly drifting away and as constantly renewed, stood before the house.

Hellier mixed with it and listened to its comments. Then, walking up St. James's Road, he examined the houses with a critical eye.

Klein was an artist. Great as his talents might be, he was unknown, a Bohemian; and these upper middle class houses, these little gardens so carefully tended, the road itself and

the atmosphere of the place were the very antithesis of everything Bohemian.

He turned from St. James's Road into Lorenzo Road, which, did places breed and multiply, might have been St. James's Road's twin brother.

Pursuing Lorenzo Road, he arrived at St. Ann's Road.

St. Ann's Road has slightly gone to decay.

We find, sometimes, in the most prosperous districts, roads or streets that do not prosper; for some mysterious reason they go down in the world, premature age touches them, lichen and shabby-genteel people invade them, milk cans hang like tin fruit on the iron railings, and barrel organs infest them as buzz-flies infest carrion.

The houses in St. Ann's Road were semi-detached, with considerable gardens back and front; drunken-looking notice boards leaned here and there over the railings, setting forth the fact that here and there a house was to let.

Hellier was coming along the road, seeking an exit to the High Street, and determining in his own mind to make inquiries of all the house agents in the neighbourhood as to the studios to

be let and the streets where such studios might be found.

He was feeling acutely the almost utter hopelessness of this wild-goose chase, when, coming out of one of the shabby-genteel gardens just in front of him, he saw a man.

The man looked up and down the road. He must have seen Hellier, but he showed no sign of having done so. Then he walked rapidly away in the direction in which Hellier was going.

Hellier walked rapidly too, although he found some difficulty in doing so, for, at the sight of the man's face, which he beheld for only a few seconds, his heart paused in its beating and then became furiously agitated.

St. Ann's Road just here is cut by Malpas Road, leading down to the High Street.

The stranger turned the corner into Malpas Road and was lost to sight.

Hellier ran.

Just as he doubled the corner he saw the stranger turn his head and then walk on rapidly.

If the stranger had noticed Hellier at first and the distance he was off, he must have noticed now that the distance was strangely

decreased; in other words, that Hellier had run after him and was in pursuit.

When the stranger reached the High Street a motor-omnibus was just passing. He jumped on board and the omnibus pursued its way.

Hellier hailed the omnibus, but the conductor was not looking and it pursued its course. There was not a cab to be seen. If there had been, what use could he have made of it? He had no warrant of arrest in his pocket. He had done mischief, if anything, for the stranger most probably had recognized the fact of the pursuit.

This last was a bitter thought, for in Hellier's mind lay the firm conviction that the stranger was Klein.

He had seen the photograph of Klein. It was a face that once seen could not easily be forgotten. The likeness, at all events, was strong enough to have acted on.

It is true, he had no warrant of arrest in his pocket; well, what of that?

He told himself now that he should have acted instantaneously, regardless of all consequences, pursued the stranger at full speed, called upon him to stop, raised the hue and cry, accused him

of theft, even, done anything to get him safely into a police cell, whilst the Yard was being rung up and the central authorities communicated with.

Of course, if the man had turned out to be not Klein, but some one else, he, Hellier, would have found himself in a very serious position.

What of that? The future of the woman he loved was involved. *She* would have forgiven him, and what did he care for all the rest of the world, for the sneers of the papers, the chaffing of his brother barristers, the fines or imprisonment that might have followed?

He had lost a chance.

The capacity to sum up a great situation, weigh everything and act instantaneously, is a gift possessed by not one man in a million, and the man that possesses it is generally a millionaire, a proved leader of armies, a captain of men.

These thoughts were passing through Hellier's mind as he walked slowly back along the High Street, casting about him for some means by which he might repair his blunder.

He, at least, knew the house from which the stranger had come, and he felt that the best

possible course to pursue was to find Freyberger and inform him of the occurrence.

But where was the detective to be found?

He might call at New Scotland Yard and try to interview him there, but that meant a loss of time. He knew that all the London police stations were telephonically connected with the Yard, and he determined to go to the nearest and state his case to the inspector on duty, asking him to communicate with the central authorities.

The nearest station was that of High Street, Kensington, and he was just turning down the archway that leads to it when he almost cannoned against the man for whom he was seeking.

CHAPTER XXX

FREYBERGER had slept scarcely three hours during the night, yet he looked quite fresh.

He had done a tremendous lot of work in the way of putting out nets.

He had as complete a list as could be obtained of the lodging-houses in the neighbourhood; every early morning coffee stall in Kensington and Bayswater had been kept under surveillance, also the newspaper shops. The tube stations at Notting Hill Gate, Holland Park, Shepherd's Bush, and Queen's Road, Bayswater, had been watched, and the result, up to this, had been the arrest of one man who had easily proved his identity and the facts of his innocence.

The bother was that Klein's description as to dress could not be given. Only the fact that he was pale, clean-shaven, of the middle height and spoke with a German accent.

"How fortunate," cried Hellier; "you are the very person I wished most to see."

"Mr. Hellier, I believe," replied the other, who did not seem at all enthusiastic at the meeting. "What can I do for you?"

"Will you walk a few paces down the street?"

"Certainly."

"It's this way," said Hellier. "I read in the papers this morning of a crime."

"Which?"

"The murder of Mr. Goldberg."

"Yes, yes."

"You remember what I said to you last night?"

"Perfectly."

"Well, it occurred to me that this was the crime we were waiting for."

"I was unaware that I was waiting for any crime," said the other.

"Well, you remember my predicting that a crime of this nature would occur?"

"An easy prediction in London, where we have a murder every second day."

"Not strangulation without an apparent motive."

"Well, well; what do you wish to say about it?"

"Well, convinced in my own mind that the author of this crime was also the criminal in the Gyde and Lefarge cases, I determined to come up here and look about."

"To play the rôle of an amateur detective, in short."

"Yes, but please don't misunderstand me. My object is not curiosity. I will be frank with you. I love Mademoiselle Lefarge, and I can never hope to marry her till her father's name is cleared."

"You wish to marry this lady and cannot do so till her father's name is cleared. Is that what I understand you to say?"

"Yes."

"Well, shall I tell you how you can best help to clear her father's name?"

"Yes."

"Go home and forget about it all; leave the matter in the hands of professional men who know how to act. Nothing interferes so much with us as interference."

"Perhaps, but you know chance sometimes gives a clue where intelligence fails to find any.

What would you say if I told you that I believed I had seen Klein, the man you are looking for, this morning?"

Freyberger started, but recovered himself instantly.

"I would say that I believed you to be mistaken."

"Yet I have seen a man whose face closely resembled that portrait you showed us last night."

"Where?"

"In St. Ann's Road, close to St. James's Road. I strolled along it by chance this morning, after visiting the scene of the murder, and, coming out of one of the houses, I saw this man."

"Yes?"

"I followed him to the High Street. There he got on to a motor-omnibus and I lost him."

"You lost him!"

"It was not my fault, for I could not stop the omnibus and there were no cabs."

"It does not in the least matter," said Freyberger, in a tone of assumed indifference, "for it was a thousand to one you were mistaken."

"If that is your opinion," said Hellier, angry at the other's tone, "there is no use in our discussing the matter further. I wish you good-day."

"Stay a moment," said Freyberger.

"Yes."

"You say you saw this man coming out of a certain house. Can you recognize the house again?"

"Yes."

"Well, as a matter of form, I will accompany you there."

Hellier hesitated a moment, then he conquered his sense of pique and turned in the direction of Hammersmith.

They walked, scarcely exchanging a word. Freyberger's mind was filled with anxiety, expectancy and a sense of deep irritation.

There was something exasperating to him about Hellier. This outsider had already cast so much light on the case; was it destined that he should cast more?

"This is the place," said Hellier, when they had reached the place.

"Empty," replied Freyberger, looking over the railings.

It was the only detached residence in the road, all the other houses were semi-detached.

The garden was neglected and the front windows blindless and dusty.

Freyberger opened the gate and, followed by Hellier, walked up the path to the front door. He knocked and rang, but there was no reply.

"Let's try the back," said Freyberger; "some people live in the back premises and only keep a hall door for ornament."

But no one, apparently, lived in the back premises of No. 18 St. Ann's Road.

A glassed-in verandah ran along the whole of the back.

Freyberger tried the verandah door, it was locked. Some green shelves, containing a few empty flower-pots, were visible; against one of the shelves stood a hoe, on the blade of the hoe some dark brown traces of earth proclaimed to the eye of the detective that the instrument had been used quite recently, and not for hoeing but for digging.

"There is no one here," said Freyberger.

"No one now," replied Hellier, "but there has been some one."

"Oh, yes, no doubt; one might say the same of Sodom and Gomorrah, or Pompeii."

"If Klein has been here, if this is one of his hiding places, he may come back."

"If!" replied Freyberger.

They were walking back down the garden path.

At the gate Hellier made one last attempt to infect the detective with his own idea.

"Could you not get a search warrant and search the place?"

This remark completely broke Freyberger's temper down, and the German came out.

"Search warrant! You talk like a child, not like a man. Warrant to search for what? Flower-pots? What I will do in the case I will do. I wish for no interference. I wish you good-day."

He turned to the left, towards Malpas Road. Hellier to the right.

"Fool," thought Hellier, "pig-headed ass; no matter—wait."

"Swine-hound," thought Freyberger; "directing *me* what to do! Search warrant!"

Freyberger turned the corner, walked a hun-

dred yards down Malpas Road and then came back.

Hellier was not in sight. The detective waited for a moment or two to make sure, and then approached No. 18.

He entered the gate, closed it behind him, and made for the back garden.

Here he stood for a moment, looking about him with eager eyes. Then he began searching about on the ground attentively, as a person searches who has dropped a coin.

There was a fairish-sized grass plot, on which the grass was rank and long. A gravelled walk lay round it, and a flowerless flower bed between the walk and the garden wall.

There was no sign of a bootmark anywhere, though the ground was soft and there had been no frost on the previous night.

The gravel was disturbed on the walk leading to the veranda, but that was nothing.

In that portion of the garden where digging was possible there was no sign. Yet the hoe had been used quite recently, and a sure instinct told him that it had not been used in the front garden, where observation was possible, but here, in this place that was overlooked by

nothing but blind walls and the back windows of an empty house.

Suddenly his eye was struck by an object upon the flower bed by the rear wall.

A half-withered cabbage leaf. There were withered leaves and to spare in the garden, but this was the only cabbage leaf. Nothing looked more natural or in keeping with the general untidiness of the place. A thousand men hunting for traces would have disregarded it.

Freyberger walked towards it and picked it up.

The bit of ground it had covered had been disturbed.

In a moment, digging with his naked hand, he had unearthed a flat, morocco leather-covered box. He opened it, it was a jewel case and empty. Upon the silk lining of the cover was the name and address:

"Smith and Wilkinson, Regent Street."

Smith and Wilkinson, Sir Anthony Gyde's jewellers.

He unearthed another box, and yet another.

The sweat stood out in beads upon his forehead.

There was something in the Gyde case that

affected him as he had never been affected before. Perhaps it was some effluence from the obscure and diabolical mind with which he felt himself at war; perhaps it was the extraordinary intricacies of the pursuit, and the foreknowledge that the creature against whom he had pitted himself was at once a demon, a genius and a madman. Perhaps it was on account of all these reasons that, when he unearthed these recent traces, his soul turned in him and a furious hunger and hatred filled his heart.

The hound hates the thing he is pursuing. The lion hates the buck. All hunting is an act of vengeance; not for food alone does the pursuer chase the pursued, but from some old antipathy begotten when the world was young.

At times Freyberger, in his unravelling of the Gyde case, was seized by an overmastering desire to have his hands upon the creature he was pursuing and to drag him to his death.

It is one of the laws of mind that the ferocity of the pursuer increases at each double and shift of the pursued.

Carefully searching with his hands in the soft earth and finding nothing else, Freyberger smoothed the soil, replaced the cabbage leaf and

carefully effaced his traces on the gravel of the walk. Then, with the jewel cases in the pocket of his overcoat, he approached the house.

He examined the lock of the verandah door. The affair was so shaky that he could have burst it in with a kick, but violence was the last thing to be used. He drew from his pocket what the thieves of Madrid term a "matadore"; what the Apachés of Paris term a "nightingale"; what an honest man might call a piece of thick wire about a foot long, but of such material as to be fairly easily bent or straightened without danger of fracture.

He bent one end of this piece of wire and introduced it into the lock, just as a surgeon introduces a probe into a sinus. Having explored the mechanism, he drew out the wire, rebent it, introduced it, and with a turn of his wrist opened the door.

Then he carefully pushed the bolt of the lock back, entered and pulled the door to.

There was nothing in the verandah, with the exception of the flower pots, the hoe, and an old watering pot that had lost its rose.

The door leading into the house gave upon a passage floored with linoleum. On the right

lay a room entirely destitute of furniture, on the left a sitting-room decently furnished, with the embers of a fire still smouldering in the grate.

The remains of some food lay upon the table in the middle of the room, also upon the table a copy of the *Daily Telegraph* of that day.

This, then, was the den of the beast, the home of the demon. Nothing at all pointed to the fact. It was just the sitting-room of a man in somewhat reduced circumstances, an honest man, or a rogue, as the case might be.

There was a tobacco jar on the mantelpiece, and in it tobacco and a bundle of cigarette papers; a pair of old slippers stood beside the armchair on the right of the fireplace.

A pile of newspapers stood in one corner of the room, and in another lay an old valise.

Freyberger opened the valise. There was a suit of clothes in it, nothing else—a frock coat and waistcoat and a pair of trousers.

They were evidently the production of a first-class tailor, though the little squares of glazed linen, bearing the customer's name, which all good London tailors affix to their productions,

both under the collar of the coat and inside the strap of the waistcoat, had been removed.

Freyberger returned the things to the valise and replaced it in the corner, then he began a minute inspection of the room.

He examined the pile of newspapers. They were all recent and dating from the day after the murder committed in the Cottage on the Fells. *Daily Telegraphs, Daily Mails, Westminister Gazettes,* every sort and condition of newspaper, and in each of them was a report, more or less full, more or less varying, of the Gyde mystery.

He returned them to their corner and resumed his search of the room, examining every hole and cranny, lifting the hearthrug and fender, exploring the contents of the trumpery vases on the chimney-piece and finding nothing of much importance, if we except the sheath of a case knife lying behind one of the vases.

He left the room and went upstairs to the bedrooms. They were all empty, clean swept and destitute of anything to hold the eye.

The person he was in pursuit of, if he lived in this house, evidently slept upon the old couch

in the sitting-room, and did not trouble much about the conveniences of life.

Freyberger returned to the sitting-room, sat down in the armchair, just as though he were at home, took a cigar from his pocket and lit it.

He was in the tiger's den. At any moment it was quite within the bounds of possibility that the door might open, and the terror, having let himself in by the verandah, enter the room. This was not what made Freyberger feel uneasy, but rather the thought that the unknown might have noticed Hellier following him and taken fright.

Freyberger was quite unarmed; yet, had his sinister opponent entered the room at that moment, he would have arrested him just as he had arrested the Fashion Street murderer, and borne him, without doubt, in the same manner, to justice.

But though absolutely destitute of fear, he was by no means destitute of caution; and as he sat smoking and waiting, he was revolving in his mind the question of calling in help.

That involved leaving the house, and that might involve total failure.

At any moment the quarry might return. He decided to wait.

The door of the room and the door leading to the verandah were open, so that he could easily hear the approach of anyone from the back premises and quite as easily the approach of anyone from the hall door.

It was after half-past two now. The house was deathly still; there was not even the ticking of a clock, the whisper of a breath of wind from the garden outside or the movement of a mouse behind the wainscotings to break the silence.

Occasionally the rumble of a passing vehicle came from the road, nothing more.

It was after three when the watcher suddenly started, sat straight up in the armchair and listened intently.

The front garden gate had been opened and shut with a clang, a step sounded on the gravel and a loud double rap at the hall door brought Freyberger to his feet.

He sprang from the room, came down the passage, undid the chain and bolts of the hall door, unlatched it, flung it open and found on the steps a telegraph boy.

"Gyde?" said the boy, holding out a telegram.

"Yes," said Freyberger, taking it.

The boy turned and went off whistling, and the detective, having rebolted the door, returned to the sitting-room with the telegram in his hand.

He tore it open.

"Handed in London Street, Paddington, 2.15. Received, High Street, Kensington, 2.40.

"Be sure to meet me at six."

That was all; no name, no address. Freyberger sat down in the armchair, with the telegram in his hand; he was thunderstruck.

He reread it, then looked at the envelope.

It was addressed:

"Gyde, 18 St. Ann's Road, Kensington."

This thing quite upset his calculations. It was addressed simply to "Gyde." It is not a common name; yet, of course, there were thousands of people of that name beside Sir Anthony. But, taking into account the jewel cases discovered, this telegram could have been sent to no else but Sir Anthony.

That meant that he was alive. Freyberger was convinced that the man seen by Hellier was

Klein. If Gyde were alive, then he must have been staying here at No. 18 St. Ann's Road. Klein had also been staying here. Therefore Gyde and Klein were working in collusion.

That would mean that Sir Anthony Gyde had entered into a partnership with this man, Klein —for what purpose?

For the purpose of murdering some unknown man in a cottage on the Fells of Cumberland, and doing it in such a manner that Klein would appear to be the victim and he, Sir Anthony Gyde, the murderer.

By extension it would mean that Lefarge long ago had entered into a similar partnership with Müller. The thing was preposterous.

What, then, was the reason of this telegram?

All at once an explanation of it flashed across Freyberger's mind. Could it be a "blind"? Could Klein, suspecting Hellier of following him, suspecting a trap of the police, have sent this message?

Freyberger had constructed Klein in his own mind from all sorts of fragments—the two photographs, his handwriting, his methods. The man, if he was a man and not a demon, was a master of subterfuge.

The momentary insanity which had caused him to strangle Mr. Goldberg would not in the least interfere with his reason.

"Now," said Freyberger to himself, "if he noticed Hellier following him, his reasoning would have run like this:

"I left a man dead in a road close by here last night; I came out this morning and was followed by a man who was very much alive and who had something of the cut of a detective.

"No one saw me last night. Why, then, did this man follow me? Can it be that they suspect that I, who was supposed to be murdered in Cumberland, am alive? Can they have circulated my description? It will be safer for me not to go back to No. 18 St. Ann's Road, and, to confuse Messieurs the Police, should they set a trap there, I will send a telegram to Gyde at that address, so that they may be confirmed in their idea that Gyde is still in the land of the living and Klein in the land of the dead.

"No one saw me last night but the landlady, and her description will scarcely help the police against me: a tall man with a black beard.

"Oh, damnation!"

Freyberger suddenly leaped to his feet.

"What possessed me! What possessed me to use such a simple artifice in the pursuit of this man, who, whatever else he may be, is half a logician, half a magician?

"When he read that description in the *Daily Telegraph* this morning, what said he to himself? He said, 'Why this exact description of a man who was not there?

"'It is either the landlady's terror that caused her to see what was not, or it is a device of the police. Now the police never use a device like that, which, after all, clouds a case to a certain extent, unless they have some important reason.

"'Of course, it may be simply due to the terror of the landlady, yet this false description, widely circulated, coupled with the fact that I have been followed, is, to say the least, suspicious.'

"That would be the line of his argument. Double fool that I was to forget that I was dealing, not with a criminal but a genius in crime.

"This man forgets nothing, foresees everything.

"I have been a fool, and yet——" Freyber-

ger's face unclouded a bit. "Is there another man in London who would have dug into his plans so deeply as I have done, connected the Lefarge case with the Gyde case and proved him indubitably the prime mover in both?

"A few days ago I knew nothing about this man whom Sir Anthony Gyde is supposed to have murdered. What do I know now? What have I discovered by the aid of my own intelligence? I know his name, his face, his mind—in part. I know that he has not been murdered by Gyde; I am almost assured that he has murdered Gyde.

"I know that, under the name of Müller, he was not murdered by Lefarge; I am almost assured that he murdered Lefarge. I know that he is a homicidal maniac, whose pet method is strangulation.

"I know that he has about him Gyde's jewellery, of which he is sure to try to dispose. I know that he has lived here; I know the address where he lived in Howland Street. But my most important knowledge is the knowledge of the stature and the bent of his mind.

"I have accumulated a mass of evidence that will damn him and crush him whenever I catch

him, a mass of evidence that will clear two innocent men and expose to the world's gaze the greatest and most complete villain that the world has ever beheld. Come, it is not so bad. I have committed a fault; I tried to match him at his own game of subterfuge, and that telegram was my answer. Alas! I am not so clever as he. But I have this in my favour, that I know much about him and he knows nothing about me.

"I have seen his hand, he has not seen mine.

"The question remains, what shall I do now? Remain here or go? Remain by all means, even if I have to remain till to-morrow morning. If he comes back I will seize him. If he does not come back, then I will know definitely that he has taken fright, that he suspects, and that he is, indeed, the murderer of Goldberg."

CHAPTER XXXI

THERE was some coal in the coal-box and a bundle of wood in the grate. The weather was chilly and a fire would have been very acceptable, but the flicker of it when dusk was drawing on might have been observed from outside. So he determined to do without a fire.

He would also be condemned to fast, for the remains of food upon the table he could not touch. One does not eat where a leper has fed, or an unclean beast.

He had his pipe with him, however, and plenty of tobacco.

Time wore on and dusk fell, gradually the room grew darker and the silence of the house more oppressive.

Nothing could be more nerve-straining than a vigil like this in the cold, in the darkness, in the silence; sitting with every sense alert, waiting for the coming of a being far more terrible than a ghost.

Passing Freyberger in the street, you would not have looked at him twice. You would never

have fancied him a man of more than ordinary strength. But, were you to have seen him stripped of his clothes, you would have recognized the proportions of a trained athlete.

He had the physical basis of courage, that is to say, a great chest measurement.

He had also the mental basis of courage, that is to say, an almost total disregard for danger.

Danger blindness.

This same mental basis of courage is not always a desirable asset, for it is often the basis, also, of a low intelligence. It nearly always bespeaks want of imagination and ideality.

In Freyberger's case, however, it was by no means the basis of a low intelligence, and as for imagination and ideality, he had quite sufficient for a man engaged in his profession.

The darkness deepened until it became absolute.

Time ceased as far as the watcher was concerned.

This sepulchral house seemed even deserted by mice; the movement of one behind the wainscoting would have come as a relief.

Now and then, for a moment, the watcher in

the chair, to obtain relief from the absolute negation of sound, pressed his hands over his ears; it was as though he were attempting to shut out the silence.

How long he had been waiting like this it would have been hard to say, probably an hour, possibly less, when he heard the front gate gently opened and as gently shut. Freyberger wore shoes; he had loosened the laces of them, and now he kicked them off.

With incredible swiftness, considering the fact that he was moving in black darkness, he was out of the room and in the passage.

At the end of the passage a pale, dim oblong of light indicated the position of the door leading on to the verandah. Freyberger came down the passage towards the door and then, himself plunged in utter darkness, he stood, like fate, waiting. He could see the squares of glass forming the verandah wall and, dimly, the garden beyond.

Presently, moving with sinister gentleness and silence, the vague silhouette of a man came gliding along the verandah side till it reached the outside door.

The man was, as far as Freyberger could

see, muffled up in a greatcoat; he wore a slouch hat and he was about the middle height.

When he reached the door he paused and drew from his pocket something, the form of which the detective could not distinguish.

Freyberger had left the door, it will be remembered, simply closed. He could easily have locked it from the inside by the same method as he had opened it, but he had determined to leave it as it was.

The man turned the handle of the door, found that it opened easily, made a slight exclamation of surprise and slipped into the verandah with the rapidity of a lizard.

He closed the door behind him.

Freyberger, standing in the passage as motionless as a corpse, scarcely breathed. The man stood for a moment, glancing around him, then, leaving the verandah, he came down the passage.

The next moment Freyberger was upon him.

A man attacked in this fashion does not cry out; if he emits any sound it is the gasp of a person who has received a douche of cold water.

The attack of Freyberger was ferocious, overpowering, unexpected, yet it was received as if

by a rock. After the first shock, which nearly bore him to the ground, the intruder stiffened; to the grip of iron he responded by a grip of steel, and then, in the dark, between the narrow walls of the passage, a terrible struggle began.

A listener in the verandah would have heard very little. Just the hard breathing of the two antagonists and the sound of their bodies hurled from side to side against the passage walls. The detective was a heavier man than his antagonist, but they were equally matched in science.

Now and then Freyberger succeeded in lifting him from his feet and, with desperate efforts, attempted to bear him backwards and throw him; but the feet always came to ground again, and the body turned from the helpless bundle that a man is who has lost possession of his feet, into an inflexible statue of steel.

Freyberger, failing in this, relaxed, or seemed to relax, his efforts for a moment; the other automatically responded, a second later. With a crash they were on the floor, the detective with his knees on the arms of his fallen antagonist. He had cross-buttocked him.

There is no position on earth where a man

is more utterly helpless than lying upon the ground, with another man kneeling upon his arms. He may kick and struggle as much as he pleases, the only result is to wear out his strength.

The fallen one recognized this fact, apparently, for he lay still.

Freyberger, breathing hard from his exertions, took a matchbox from his waistcoat pocket, lit a match and cast its light upon the face of the man beneath him.

The man was Hellier.

CHAPTER XXXII

"MY GOD!" said Freyberger. "You!"

"Let me get up," said the other. "Yes, it is I; we have both been mistaken, it seems."

Freyberger said nothing, but rose to his feet and flung the extinguished match away. They were again in darkness, but the detective did not strike another match.

For a moment he was too angry for speech. Certain in his own mind that he was dealing with Klein, triumphant at having captured him, his feelings may be imagined when he found beneath him, not the criminal for whom he had been seeking, but the interloper, Hellier.

Hellier had also risen to his feet.

"Strike a light," he said, "and let me see where I am. I am giddy from that fall."

"I will strike no light," replied the other, in a hard voice; "you can explain yourself in the darkness. You have cast enough darkness on this business already. You ought to be used to darkness; come, explain yourself."

"Explain what?" said Hellier, in an irritable voice. "It seems to me the explanation is clear enough."

"Make it clearer. What are you doing here? What are you meddling in police affairs for? Eh! You are one of those confounded people who fancy themselves; one of those people who will not see where their own business lies. What are you doing here?"

"Seems to me, I'm talking to a fool," replied the other. "You know well enough why I am here. I came here to find a mutual acquaintance of ours named Klein. If not to find him, at least, to find traces of him and to inspect the premises. You told me this morning you did not think he had been here, yet I find you here on the same job as myself; if you had only been frank this would not have happened."

"Well," replied the other, "you have been here and have not found him, so you had better go. I will give him your kind regards when I see him, which will not be to-night. You have spoilt the affair as far as possible."

"How?"

"How? You have frightened him, that is all."

"How?"

"How?" shouted Freyberger, "By your d—d silly attempt to follow him this morning, that is how."

"If I had not seen him, should we have known of his connexion with this house?"

"A thousand times better never to have known, considering the price we have paid for our knowledge. He was unsuspecting, now he suspects. So long as he was unsuspecting, all the chances were in our favour. Now they are all against us. Go, tell your young lady that. Say Inspector Freyberger told you to tell her, and say anything else you please."

Hellier did not reply. He felt deeply mortified, for he felt there was truth in the words.

He re-entered the verandah and opened the door leading to the garden.

"Are you going to remain?" he asked.

"I am."

"Well, all I can say is I am very sorry. What I did was for the best."

"It will be a lesson to you in future," replied the other, "to trust people who are to be trusted, and let the police do their own work."

"Good-night," said Hellier. Freyberger

grumbled some reply and the young man departed.

Now Hellier had committed no great fault; he had even supplied information that might have brought the whole case to a satisfactory termination. But Freyberger was not in a frame of mind to do justice to the barrister.

He was jealous, and that is the fact of the matter, as jealous of the Gyde affair as any old man has ever been of his young wife.

CHAPTER XXXIII

HELLIER returned, slowly and sadly, to the High Street.

Assured in his own mind that Klein inhabited the house in St. Ann's Road, hopeless of any help from Freyberger, whom he had put down as a self-conceited man of not very luminous intelligence, he had undertaken the desperate venture of going himself to the house, tackling the occupant if he were at home, and if he were absent exploring the place.

He had provided himself with a powerful chisel to prise the verandah door open. He had not to use it, however, for, as we have seen, the door was only held by the catch.

It had been an expedition requiring a very great deal of pluck, considering the appalling man with whom he would have had to contend had his suspicions been correct. And it had ended in such a miserable fiasco!

When he had lain on the floor of the passage with Freyberger on top of him, he imagined that his last moment had come. He had not

even cried out for help, knowing that before help could arrive he would be dead.

He had not come badly out of the business, yet he felt depressed with a miserable sense of failure.

It was striking nine when he passed the High Street, Kensington, Station; just at the entry a flower-seller, with a basket of early roses and Nice violets, caught his eye. He bought a great bunch, and, calling a passing cab, ordered the driver to take him to the Langham.

Violets were Cécile Lefarge's favourite flowers.

Love may be a liar, love may be blind, love may be anything you please, but, whatever else he may be, love is a courtier. No frilled marquess of the old régime, by long study, ever knew his monarch's predilections as a lover by instinct knows the predilections of his mistress.

Hellier bought violets instead of roses, instinctively and not from choice.

At the Langham he found that Mademoiselle Lefarge was in, and a few moments later he was in her presence.

She advanced to meet him, with hand outstretched.

"I have brought you these," he said, sinking into a chair, whilst she took a seat near him, "and some news—bad news, I am afraid."

"I am used to that," replied she, "but any news coming from you can not be entirely bad. You, who have done so much and thought so much for me."

"I wish I could have done more," he replied. Then he told her the events of the day, suppressing nothing, altering nothing.

She listened to him attentively. When he had finished she said:

"Is that all?"

"I think," he said, "I have told you a good deal. I wish I could have told you less, or more."

"It is a good deal," she replied. "And you went, alone and unarmed, to face that fearful man?"

"Yes, and you see the result. I have spoiled everything."

"You have not spoiled my regard for you," she replied. "You are very brave, and you know, or perhaps you do not know, how a woman can admire bravery in a man. But you are better than brave, you are single-hearted.

And you let yourself be depressed by what that man, Freyberger, said to you to-night?"

"It has depressed me, for he spoke the truth. He had no motive for speaking otherwise."

Cécile smiled.

"Not a motive, perhaps, but a half motive."

"How?"

"What makes a woman depreciate the good looks of another woman? Jealousy, my friend."

"But Freyberger——"

"Is not a woman. No, but are men never jealous? I watched him last night when you were speaking to him. I could read his mind. The information you gave made his eyes sparkle with pleasure and excitement. Yet he was displeased. He spoke to you almost as if you were an antagonist. He said to himself, 'This is a professional rival, a clever man who will, perhaps, take from me some of the honour should I bring this case to a successful termination.'

"I believe in this Mr. Freyberger. He has great qualities, he has perception and determination, but he is human. It is human to be jealous. You have committed no fault that I

can see; but, then, I am not Freyberger. Had I met you in the passage of that house to-night, I would have said to you, 'Your coming here makes no difference if the bird has flown; if the bird has not flown then remain with me, and help to capture him on his return.' But then, you see, I am just a woman, not a jealous detective.

"Do not be depressed, and, above all, do not relax your vigilance, for something tells me that, clever though our friend the detective may be, you will materially help in the completion of this terrible case. The only thing I regret is——"

"Yes?"

She sighed. "I regret that I have been instrumental in casting the shadow of so much crime and wickedness upon so true a heart as my friend Hellier."

He left her, carrying with him the perfume of her hair and the warmth of her lips.

She loved him entirely, and told him so without a word. He could have made her his mistress that night. He would as soon have spat upon the pyx.

The only love that is worth a name is the

love that builds up barriers, the love that can take yet withholds its hand.

The fatal, fatal mistake of the woman who gives herself up to a man before marriage, the fatal mistake is not so much perhaps in yielding to nature as in entertaining the idea that she is loved.

To Hellier the idea of love was inseparable from the idea of marriage. He could not think of the woman he loved in any other position than exactly on the same pedestal as himself. His wife before all the world, on a par with his mother and his sisters, respected by them and received as one of themselves.

And she was the daughter of an assassin. A cold-blooded murderer, whose crime had shocked Europe.

It was not her fault. Leprosy is not the leper's fault; is it any the less a barrier, shutting happiness out for ever from the afflicted one?

CHAPTER XXXIV

FREYBERGER remained at his post all that night.

It was the bitterest experience he had ever known.

Without food, without fire, without light, half worn out from his struggle with Hellier and depressed by the result, the chance of the capture of Klein reduced to the barest possible, he still remained on guard, watchful and ready to spring.

With the full light of day he left the place, bearing with him the only scrap of evidence that could be any use, that is to say, the small valise containing the suit of clothes and the jewel cases he had unearthed from the garden.

He had some food at an early morning coffee-stall in the High Street, and then he proceeded on his way to the Yard.

The great Kalihari Desert is not a more desolate place than London in the early morning.

There are no cabs, there are no omnibuses;

there are no shops, no people. You hear that which is the voice of a city's desolation, the echo of your own footsteps. The High Street of Kensington was empty from end to end, experiencing the hiatus in traffic which comes between the passing of the last market gardener's cart and the passage of the first cab.

Freyberger, with the valise in his hand, had made up his mind to walk to his destination, when an early hansom turned out of one of the side streets, and, getting in, he told the driver to take him to the Yard.

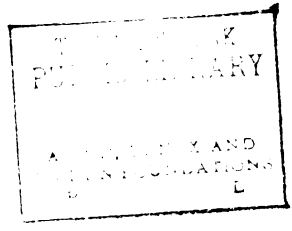
Here he delivered up the valise and the jewel cases, directed that a man should be sent to St. Ann's Road to take charge of the house and make inquiries; also that Sir Anthony Gyde's tailor should be discovered and the clothes submitted to him.

Then he returned to his lodgings, south of the water, to obtain a few hours' sleep.

"Well, Freyberger," said the Chief to the detective, when at four o'clock that afternoon they found themselves together, "what have you to report?"

Freyberger reported everything that we know as having taken place in St. Ann's Road.

And She Was the Daughter of an Assassin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Had you been listening to his report, you would have admitted that if he were jealous he was also honest, for he minimized nothing, nor did he magnify anything or attempt to cast the blame for his failure on Hellier.

He just told the truth. Freyberger loved the truth, not from any exalted reason, but simply because it was the tool by which he earned his living and made his reputation. The golden measuring rod by which he measured statements, the crucible from which he distilled deductions, the glass mask which he wore tied over his face to prevent himself being poisoned by the fumes of misapprehension.

"You have missed him this time," said the Chief; "but never mind, you are driving him back, you are getting him slowly into a corner. Another move may mean checkmate."

"If I had taken him yesterday," replied Freyberger, "it would have meant a life saved —who knows? Perhaps several lives saved. He is loose now, like a wild beast, and the question we have to consider is this. If he is seriously alarmed, if he suspects that we know of his monomania, may fear overcome his madness and cause him to withhold his hand?"

"What is your opinion on that point?" asked the Chief. "You have considerable knowledge of the psychology of crime."

"Well, sir, it is my belief that, if he is really alarmed, fear will cause him to withhold his hand—for a while.

"But fear, though checking, will not stay his desire to kill. He will at first be careful, then, as time goes on and he gets farther away from this murder, his caution will slacken and the desire become unchained."

"You think fear is a check upon lunacy?"

"Not much. But I conceive the mind of this man to be essentially not the mind of a lunatic.

"If I might use a simile, I would liken this man's mind to a country peopled with evil persons, and possessing one town peopled with devils—that is the lunatic spot."

"You almost speak as though you believe lunacy to be possession by devils?"

"Absolutely, I believe that," replied Freyberger. "Firstly, from a prolonged study of lunacy; secondly, because my Bible bids me believe it. I am a Protestant."

"You have heard the report we have had

about those clothes you brought here this morning in the valise?"

"No."

"Smalpage is, or should we say was, Sir Anthony Gyde's tailor. He identifies the measurements as being those of Sir Anthony Gyde, and his chief cutter identifies the garments as his work, though, of course, he cannot say for certain for whom he cut them."

"That is evidence enough," replied Freyberger; "the clothes are Gyde's."

"Yes, I think so. Then, again, Smith and Wilkinson, the jewellers, identify the jewel cases as having been supplied to Sir Anthony; the bank identify them as similar to those withdrawn by Sir Anthony."

"That is evidence enough," again replied Freyberger. "The things are Gyde's; the evidence is, unhappily, of little use at present. It will help to hang our man when we catch him. There is nothing for us now to do but wait."

CHAPTER XXXV

A MONTH passed, and April came to London, lighting the crocuses like little lamps along the borders of the parks. Nothing could have been kindlier than her coming or more cruel than her going, for it froze hard during the last few days of her month; buds were brought to untimely ruin, and the ice on the ponds was sufficiently thick almost for skating.

But the first of May broke cloudless and warm, the herald of three weeks of perfect weather.

Mademoiselle Lefarge had gone back to France, and Hellier ought to have been on circuit.

But he was not in the mood for business. His mind was occupied by one thing, the Gyde case. Six weeks had passed since the murder of Mr. Goldberg and the occurrence in St. Ann's Road, yet not a word of the solution of the mystery had come to the public ears as to Sir Anthony Gyde; the public were beginning to forget him.

Occasionally some old clubman, a once friend of his, would remember the fact of his existence, wonder why the police had not caught him, and damn them for their inefficiency.

Up in Cumberland where things, little or big, are not so easily forgotten, the affair was still being discussed in market-square and village ale-house. The Cottage on the Fells was deserted, and not for many decades could the most astute land-agent hope to let it again.

One night, it was the 8th of May, exactly two months and ten days after the murder, or the supposed murder, of Klein, a strange thing occurred.

A man named Davis, journeying from Alston to Langwathby on foot, lost his way upon the fells, at dusk, and wandered for several hours, till the rising moon showed him a few broken walls and remains of houses, and he knew that he had come to the old ruined fell village of Unthank.

In the time of the Plague a fugitive from London sought refuge in this village, and the inhabitants of it showed their hospitality by moving out of it *en masse* and leaving the plague-stricken one in undisputed possession.

They built themselves another village, lower down, which they also labelled Unthank and which remains to this day.

Davis, recognizing the ruins, took them for a point of departure, and at last struck the road at the foot of the fells, which runs through Gamblesby and Melmerby to Blencarn.

Hopeless of reaching Langwathby that night, he determined to make for Blencarn and put up with a relation of his who lived there.

He was nearing the place and the moon was high in the sky, making the roadway as clear as if viewed by daylight, when, on the road right before him, he saw the figure of a man walking also in the direction of Blencarn.

It was just now that Davis remembered that he was close to the cottage where the murder was committed and he increased his pace, hoping to overtake the man and walk with him for company's sake. As he drew closer he recognized that the person before him was not an ordinary countryman or farmer, but evidently a man used to the pavement of a town and seemingly well dressed.

Then, to his astonishment, Davis saw the

stranger pause at a gate on the left of the road, unchain it and walk through, carefully putting the chain up again.

Instantly Davis recognized the gate, and the fact that it was the gate that gave entrance to the field beyond which, hidden by a dip of the fells, lay the cottage of the murder.

He was passing the gate, when the stranger, who was only twenty paces or so away in the field, turned, saw Davis and beckoned to him to follow him.

The moonlight was full on the stranger's face, and, horrified, Davis recognized that the man before him in the field was Sir Anthony Gyde.

As he stood spellbound, gazing at the murderer, a cloud passed over the moon, and the shadow of the cloud, like a black handkerchief, swept over the field and seemed to sweep Sir Anthony Gyde away. For when the moon returned he was gone.

Then Davis ran, and he did not stop running until he reached the door of his relative. The accounts he gave of the occurrence were so confused as to cast discredit on his narrative, and he was put down as a liar for the strange reason

that he was not gifted with the power of story-telling.

Had he seen, or pretended to have seen, the ghost of Klein, every one would have believed him, for every one knew that Klein was dead. But Sir Anthony Gyde was alive, and the countryside were waiting to see him caught and hanged, and no one wished to believe in his ghost for that very reason.

CHAPTER XXXVI

IT was May 9, the day after that on which Mr. Davis, away up in Cumberland, had seen what he had seen upon the road to Blencarn.

It had been a glorious day, but the beauty of the weather did not appeal to Freyberger.

The Gyde case had hit him badly; after all his researches and calculations, after all the energy he had spent upon it, it had slipped away and left him.

He had proved so much, yet he had done so little.

That is perhaps the most exasperating thing about detective work. You have your case complete; the whole thing is reasoned out, plotted and planned; you have built round your man a complete structure, a prison that will hold him, you only want one little brick of evidence to complete it; you find your brick, put it in its place, and then open the door of your structure, expecting to find your man inside and to lead him out to justice.

He is gone.

The warrant for his arrest is in your pocket; he has been shadowed for days past by your subordinates; he lodged last night at such and such a place and was shaved this morning by such and such a barber; he was having luncheon an hour ago at such and such a café; your subordinate tells you he is still there. You go to find him, and he has gone.

He has scented arrest.

Again, you may have your structure of evidence complete only for the one little brick.

That brick is nowhere to be found. There are a dozen murderers known to the police, a dozen assassins walking the pavements of London convicted in the eyes of justice, yet they are immune. Their tombs are already constructed, but are incomplete, wanting just one, or maybe two, little bricks.

In the words of the police, "No jury would convict."

In the case of Klein it was different. The case was complete against him of having been a prime mover in the Gyde and Lefarge affairs. Once safely lodged in gaol, Freyberger felt that the whole truth would be extracted from him.

What a case it would be! What a triumph for the man who had worked in it and completed it single-handed. Whatever Klein's diabolical methods might be, Freyberger was certain of one thing—that their extraordinary nature would astonish Europe.

All that had to be done now was to capture this man—and he had vanished.

It will be remembered that Freyberger had objected strongly to the publication of Klein's photograph.

Even still he upheld this objection, and the Chief had not pressed the matter, having much respect for the opinion of his subordinate. But as week followed week, without sign or movement on the part of the man they were after, the patience of the Chief began to give.

On the evening of May 9 it snapped.

"We have given him now a very considerable time," he said, during a conversation with his subordinate. "We have given him a good long rope to hang himself with."

"Yes, sir," replied the other, "and I know it has been by my advice."

"Well, what is your advice now?"

"To give him a little more. Who knows, he

may be, even at this moment, making the noose for his own neck."

"I will give him three days more."

"Three days?"

"If he does not show himself in that time his portrait and description will be published broadcast. We have waited too long."

"I am sorry you think that, sir!"

"Oh, I am not casting any reflection on your judgment. I believe with you that this man will efface himself, or try to efface himself, fully, when he sees his portrait in every news-sheet, but there is the chance that he will fail. Besides, Freyberger, I am not sure that the course we have already taken is one absolutely moral."

"How so, sir?"

"We have refrained from alarming this man."

"Yes."

"By doing so we have—well, to put it plainly—given him the incentive to commit another murder."

"That is what I have been waiting for, sir, and I have no qualms at all in the matter. If this man lives, it is inevitable that he must murder. Far better is it that he should commit

one more crime and be taken, than that he should escape now, take warning that he is watched, amend his methods and enter on a new campaign of infamy.

"Besides, it is not at all inevitable that he should commit another murder. An attempt is quite sufficient. His next victim may be more fortunate than Mr. Goldberg. His next victim may turn the tables upon him. Who knows? He may fall upon a sheep and find that he has tackled a wolf."

The Chief smiled.

"Look at his past," he replied. "Old men, women and children were his victims."

"That is true, but old men sometimes go armed, and women are sometimes heroic, and there is always the chance of a third person coming on the scene."

"If," said the other, "in three days from now the man is not arrested I will do what I have said."

Freyberger bowed, and the interview terminated.

He left the Yard with great depression at his heart. Three days more. It was against all probability that anything would happen during

the next three days, unless Providence, watching from above, chose to bring matters to a conclusion.

Freyberger felt, for the first time in his life, discouraged; this discouragement remained with him all night and the next day, which he had to spend at the Central Criminal Court, in connexion with a bank forgery case.

On leaving the Courts very late he repaired to his own rooms, only to find a telegram from the Chief desiring his immediate attendance at the Yard.

CHAPTER XXXVII

A QUARTER of an hour later he was standing in the presence of his superior.

"Good-evening, Freyberger," said the Chief.

"Good-evening, sir."

"There is an express to Birmingham from Paddington at a quarter past midnight."

"Yes, sir."

"I want you to catch it."

"Yes, sir."

"The train stops at Reading."

"So I believe, sir."

"You must get out at Reading and spend the night there. I want you early on the spot to-morrow morning. A murder has been committed."

"At Reading?"

"No, at Sonning."

"The village of Sonning-on-Thames?"

"Precisely. Do you know it?"

"Slightly. I have in fact——"

"Yes?"

"Well, it is a pleasure resort, a place where young couples——"

"Precisely—where a young man might take a young woman."

Freyberger smiled discreetly.

"Well," continued the Chief, "I am sending you down there, hoping you may meet some one more interesting than a girl."

"And who may that be, sir?" asked Freyberger, a sudden glitter coming into his eye.

"Klein."

"Ah!"

"Müller, Kolbecker—call him what you will."

"So!"

"You do not seem as jubilant as one might expect."

"I am not jubilant, sir; I would swear not to laugh again until I have this man by the shoulder, only the oath would be unnecessary. I am not jubilant, but I am glad. May I have the details of this crime?"

"A man named Bronson, a farm-labourer, fifty years of age, has been found stabbed to death in a field at Sonning."

"Stabbed!"

"Stabbed; there was no apparent motive for the crime, and the body was hacked as if by a maniac."

"That is he!" said Freyberger.

"I suspect so. The only thing that makes me feel doubtful is the use of the knife. A strangler once a strangler always."

"He is frightened," said Freyberger. "He must assuage his passion for murder, and he has changed his method."

"Do you think you will find him in the neighbourhood of Sonning?"

"I think it probable."

"Probable?"

"Yes."

"We have a few minutes to spare before you need start to catch your train," said the Chief, who always liked to get at Freyberger's line of reasoning. "So you can just tell me why you think it probable. I would have put it down only as possible."

"In this way, sir. Why has this murder (if it is one of Klein's), why has it taken place at Sonning rather than anywhere else? Sonning is a pleasant place enough to spend a day, it

would be pleasant enough to spend a week there, but that fact is not an inducement to a murderer. I believe this man commits his crimes within easy reach of some den of his. We know from the house-agent that a man, similar to him, took a house in St. Ann's Road. We have seen that he only furnished one room, and had no servant or help of any sort. He does not want to be spied on.

"We may suppose he left London, and for some reason or another took probably a cottage near Sonning, just as he took a cottage on the Fells of Cumberland."

"Yes, we may suppose that."

"Well—when was this murder committed?"

"Yesterday morning."

"Then it is probable he is still in the neighbourhood. Leaving aside the assumption that this murder was a sudden affair, the impulse of a moment, and that he had not made plans for leaving Sonning, there is the fact that a murderer of this type has a tendency to cling to the neighbourhood of his crime. Well, we will see. There is one thing I would like to have before I start."

"What is that?"

"The sheath of the knife I found at St. Ann's Road."

"You shall have it."

The Chief rang, and ordered the officer who answered the summons to bring the article in question, and Freyberger, placing it in his pocket, departed.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

HE caught the Birmingham express that leaves Paddington at 12.15, and arrived at Reading nine minutes after one.

Here he took a bed at the Eastern Hotel, and went to sleep.

At eight o'clock the next morning he was in consultation with the Chief of the Berkshire Constabulary.

"It is a most extraordinary case," said that gentleman. "Of course, it can be nothing else but the work of a lunatic. The body was found at three o'clock yesterday in a turnip field, close to the river. The man had no enemies, a simple, inoffensive creature, with a wife and five children. Our surgeon says that the murder must have taken place some time early in the morning. The throat was cut from ear to ear, most extraordinary case—mutilated too, but you will see the body for yourself."

"Have you the knife?"

"Yes."

"May I see it?"

"By all means."

The chief constable opened a drawer and produced something wrapped up in brown paper.

He unwrapped the paper and produced a savage-looking knife with a green shagreen handle.

"It is a case knife," said the chief constable. "The case will be perhaps a clue when we come upon it."

"I believe I have it in my pocket," said Freyberger, and he produced the sheath he had found in the house in St. Ann's Road.

The chief constable took the sheath and fitted the knife into it.

It fitted exactly.

"But how did you get it?" asked the chief constable in considerable surprise. "We found the knife in the body; it was fixed by such a ferocious blow between the ribs that the murderer could not extricate it. How did you come upon the sheath? You came from London only last night; did you find it here or in London?"

"I have not time to tell you, sir, the whole history of the case. I found that sheath nearly two months ago in a house in London. If that knife could speak, its tale would, perhaps, turn

your hair grey with horror. We must act at once, or the game will escape us. We are after a person who is more than a man, a person infinitely more in the shape of a devil, a person who can change his form. I tell you, I would sooner tackle a tiger than this man; yet I am going to tackle him and take him, too. Have you a map of Sonning?"

The chief constable produced an ordnance map.

"This," said he, "is the field where the murder was committed."

He placed his finger on the spot.

"Is there a pathway across the field?"

"Yes, here between these two roads."

"There is a cottage here," said Freyberger, pointing to a spot so marked at the angle where the path met the road.

"Yes, Bronson's cottage. He was murdered a hundred yards away from his home. There is a great heap of refuse in the middle of the field, and the body lay behind it and so was not discovered for some hours. There are no back windows to the cottage and no back door."

"Are there any strangers lodging at Sonning?"

"Yes, a few, but no one at all of a suspicious nature, or likely to have anything to do with the crime."

"I imagine," said Freyberger, "that the murderer is still in the neighbourhood of Sonning. Of course, I may be wrong, still, I intend to go there and make some observations. I would prefer to go alone; you are known in the neighbourhood and I am not."

"How shall you go?"

"I—Oh, I shall go as if I were going for pleasure, not business. I shall hire a boat and go by river."

"Have you any arms?"

"No; if I had a pistol, and if I were so fortunate as to find my man, I might be unfortunate enough to shoot him. Pistols have a habit of going off in struggles. Besides, I have a nervous horror of them."

"I remember you arrested that man in Fashion Street, and he was a pretty tough customer."

"I have met others worse, but I have never had fire-arms about me. A walking-stick is the only weapon I ever carry."

"You have lots of pluck."

"Lots, but I tell you, all the same, this man I am after now almost frightens me. No matter, what is, is, and what will be, will be. Can you tell me where I can get a butterfly net?"

"What do you want that for?"

"To catch butterflies; this warm weather has brought them out in flocks. I want, also, a flannel coat, such as boating people wear; one does not go butterfly-hunting in a tall hat."

"I see; come down town and I will rig you out; but, first, shall we go to the mortuary?"

"Yes," replied Freyberger. "Before meeting the murderer I should like to see the victim."

They repaired to the mortuary, and there the detective inspected the body of the unfortunate Bronson.

"It is a most extraordinary case," said the chief constable. "He was a most inoffensive creature; he had never, to any man's knowledge, made an enemy. He had committed no fault."

"I beg your pardon, but I imagine he had."

"How?"

"He had committed the fault of being alive. The man we are after is a fault-finder when the fit seizes him. A temporary lunacy. Some

periodic lunatics have objections. I knew one who, perfectly sane on other points, flew into a paroxysm of rage when a musk-melon was brought within his purview. He objected to musk-melons because they were round.

"He wanted them square. God Almighty, however, preferred that they should be round. Hence the trouble.

"Another quarrelled with grey cats when he met them, simply because they were grey. He quarrelled with them by covering them with paraffin and setting them on fire.

"The man who did this quarrelled with the thing that lies here because it was alive. He has remedied the defect."

He had indeed.

It is needful only to say that the body exhibited twenty wounds, each in itself sufficient to have caused death.

But the master wound was in the throat. It was evidently the first given. The rest were needless, and the result of maniacal fury on the part of the murderer.

They left the place and went to a clothier's, where Freyberger bought a mulberry-coloured blazer and a straw hat with a striped ribbon.

Having purchased a butterfly net he returned to the hotel and dressed. When his toilet was complete, he looked at himself in a glass and felt satisfied.

He looked, in fact, like a shopboy whose taste for entomology had devoured his taste in dress.

Smug and plump, you never would have suspected this shopboy or café waiter, out for a holiday, to be a detective destined to European fame. A chilly-blooded calculator, a profound thinker, with an intimate knowledge of all the most terrible abysses of crime. A man merciless and fearless as a sword.

An hour later, at the boat-slip just above the bridge, Freyberger stood bargaining for a boat.

It was a lovely day, soft and warm, with a cloudless sky.

He was not a very good oarsman, but good enough to scull a boat safely on a smooth river. After he had passed the bridge and East's boat-slip, he rested on his oars for a minute.

"If I had not questioned her imagination," he said to himself, "that man Hellier would not have remembered those other crimes, and I would not have come near the bull's-eye like this. How terribly right she was. She divined

this devil, she knew his construction, his capacity for murder without a motive. She is an innocent woman, yet she knew this demon as well as if she had constructed him—sub-consciously. Ah, the sub-consciousness of women, what does it not hide? A woman who loves is a terrible thing, more keen-scented than a hound, more dangerous than a tiger.

"My friend Klein, if I miss you here it will not be the fault of Mademoiselle Lefarge. If I miss you here, I shall find you again, but if I find you here, I will be the means of saving the lives of perhaps two more men, perhaps three."

He resumed his sculls.

The warm weather had brought boats out as well as butterflies and butterfly-hunters, girls in summer dresses and men in flannels, who little dreamt that tragedy was passing them in the form of the little man in the mulberry-coloured coat.

At Sonning Lock he managed to get through without drowning himself or upsetting his boat. It was the first time he had negotiated a lock, and he was not sorry when his cockle-shell was safely moored to the landing-stage of the White Hart Hotel.

There were several people in the gardens, men in flannels and girls in boating costumes, seated in the arbours.

He passed them and entered the hotel by the back way.

There was no one in the hall, and he took a cane-bottomed easy-chair by the bar window, put his butterfly-net in a corner and called for a stone ginger-beer.

He intended to make a thorough examination of Sonning and his plan would be very much simplified by the fact that he could eliminate all residents, all people who kept servants. What he was looking for was a man living in a cottage alone.

"Had good sport?" asked the young lady who served him, speaking in a perfunctory manner and twisting a hairpin straight that had somehow got loose, whilst she gazed over Freyberger's head at the sunlit garden as if she were addressing some one there.

"Oh, the butterfly-net?" said he. "It's not mine. I brought it down for a friend, he promised to meet me here, a Mr. Rogers—you haven't seen anything of him, I suppose?"

"What was he like?" asked the lady behind the bar in a disinterested voice.

Freyberger drew a word picture of Klein.

She shook her head and settled herself down behind the bar to resume the perusal of a Trumper's penny story, a compound of love, murder, arson and religion wonderfully mixed.

Freyberger sipped his drink. He looked around him admiring the place, for the hall of the White Hart is one of the prettiest and pleasantest little hotel halls in the world.

"You have had a murder down here they tell me," he said, lighting a cigar.

"Yes," said the girl behind the bar, "Jim Bronson. I saw him brought by covered with a sheet. Hacked about horrid they said he was." She looked up like an ogre, and then relapsed into *Tracked by a Stain* just at the part where the parson in the dogcart is approaching the murderer, who is hidden behind the hedge.

"It's not often you have those sort of occurrences here?" said Freyberger.

"No," replied the girl, with her eyes glued to the book.

"Very quiet neighbourhood, as a rule, I should think."

"Yes."

"Artists and people come here, I suppose, a good deal."

"A good deal."

Just at this moment a shadow darkened the doorway.

An old gentleman had entered the hall of the White Hart. He walked, leaning on a stick.

He was dressed in well-worn grey tweed, and wore a felt hat, fawn-coloured and rather broad of brim.

He came to the bar and called for an absinthe, and his voice caused Freyberger to examine him more attentively.

There were many things about this voice, and they all conspired to mark it out as a distinctive voice. A voice in a million.

It was the voice of an educated man, and it would be very hard to say what there was in it repellent and chilling, but repellent and chilling it was.

But it was the face of the newcomer that fascinated Freyberger.

"Where have I seen that face before?" he thought.

And then all at once came the reply born of the question:

"It is the face of Klein grown old."

For a moment Freyberger was seized by a feeling of physical sickness. The horrors and perplexities of the Gyde case had culminated in this last horror and perplexity.

This could not be the man who, eight years ago, had sat for his portrait to the photographer in Paris; this could not be the man whom Hellier had followed on account of the likeness to that photograph.

This was an old, old man.

Had he aged then in the course of a few weeks? Had premature decay fallen upon him, turning him almost at a stroke from a man of forty or so to a man of seventy and more?

Was he himself mistaken?

No. This was indeed the face of the photograph, the face that had left its imprint on the retina of Leloir, the same face seen through the veil of age.

Yet if that were so, one would have to believe that this old man, who seemed scarcely strong enough to harm a child, had a few hours ago killed, with brutal ferocity, a fellow being.

As Freyberger sat examining the newcomer, he became aware that the newcomer was examining him.

The young lady behind the bar had relapsed into *Tracked by a Stain;* the shopboy with the butterfly-net, the old gentleman sipping his absinthe, were of no interest to her.

Freyberger yawned. He felt that he was being observed, and he fancied that he was being observed with approbation—the approbation with which a butcher observes a fat sheep.

If this were so, the situation was not without its humour. The humour of it did not, however, strike him. He was deficient in that sense.

He was on the point of making a remark upon the weather in the hope of starting a conversation when the old man forestalled him.

You never know a man's face properly till you talk to him, and Freyberger, as the conversation proceeded, sat drinking in with his eyes the details and the *tout ensemble* of the countenance before him.

What a strange, weary, wicked and altogether mysterious face it was!

One said to oneself, "If blood circulates behind it, that blood must surely be grey in colour."

They conversed, and it was wonderful how the old man drew Freyberger out, and in the course of ten minutes or so, without seeming at all inquisitive, learned most of his private affairs and much about his life.

Freyberger told him frankly and freely how he had come to England only a few weeks ago from Bremen in search of a job as book-keeper, how he had no friends in England, how he had a maiden aunt living in Cologne, and a widowed sister living at Düsseldorf, how he had wandered down to Sonning in search of the picturesque.

The girl behind the bar here put down her book to answer a call from the coffee-room, and they found themselves alone.

"You are fond of nature?" asked the old man, sipping the remains of his absinthe.

"It is my passion," replied Freyberger.

"Well, if you will allow me to be your guide, I will conduct you to a spot the most beautiful in England; quite close here, it lies."

"Ah!"

"Indeed, yes, the most beautiful in England."

"I shall be happy."

"We will walk together," continued the other. "A cigar, please," to the young lady who had just returned.

He held out the box to Freyberger, who took one and thanked him.

That the stranger was Klein, despite his miraculous aging, he felt almost certain. But to arrest him there and then for no other reason than lay in an unconfirmed belief was not to be thought of. To let a murderer escape is bad, but to arrest a man who, if he is not innocent, still has no stains or proof of guilt is worse. It is what the Criminal Investigation Department calls a "serious mistake," and Freyberger did not fancy such a tag to his reputation.

The only other course was to leave the protection of houses and people, to go with this satanic criminal where no eye could see what happened, to be attacked by him and to master him.

"Are you ready?" asked the old man.

"I am ready," replied Freyberger. The girl, who was putting the cigar-box back on its shelf, turned round.

"If your friend calls, shall I say you will come back?" she asked.

"My friend?" said Freyberger, who saw across the grey face of his awful companion a shadow pass.

"Your friend, Mr. Rogers," said the girl. "He you brought the butterfly-net for."

He had distinctly told the stranger that he knew nobody in England, and that he had come down to Sonning moved by impulse and for no especial purpose save the search after the picturesque. In his surprise at the old man's likeness to the man he was in search of he had quite forgotten the butterfly-net—a serious mistake, as he was about to find out.

Another man might have entered into explanations or attempted to do so. Freyberger laughed in a brutal and cynical manner.

His whole being seemed to change in one swift moment.

He turned his back on the girl and, without vouchsafing an answer, said to the stranger, "Come."

It was almost as if he had said, "I arrest you."

They passed out together into the garden. The day was clouding over, and the last rays of sunshine fled as if from their presence as they followed the rose-bordered path to the little gate opening upon the road.

CHAPTER XXXIX

"WHERE do you live?" asked Freyberger when they were on the road.

"We shall pass the place, and I will show you," replied the other.

They turned to the left towards the village and walked for a moment in silence.

The stranger, despite his age and apparent infirmity, walked with a brisk step. Freyberger did not lag behind.

Then this conversation began between them, Freyberger speaking first.

"So you have had a murder here?"

"Is that so?"

"It is so, and I have come down here to arrest the murderer."

"You are——"

"I am Gustave Freyberger."

"Indeed!"

"When I was talking to you in the bar, I fancied that some one was listening to me, and

so I told you of my aunt in Bremen—was it? and of my sister in Düsseldorf."

Freyberger as they walked took side glances at the terrible profile of his companion rigid as the profile of the Sphinx; at a sign or movement indicative of guilt he was prepared to act. He was waiting for the psychological moment.

But the stranger made neither sign nor movement, and they passed through the little village, past the post office, past the cottage, which serves as a police station. Then they turned a corner, and a lonely country road lay before them.

Lonely-looking would, perhaps, be a better term, for the roads about here are by no means destitute of travellers on a summer's day.

"You do not live in the village, then?" said Freyberger.

"No," replied the other, "I live a little way down this road."

"That is convenient," said Freyberger, "for if I am not mistaken we are going to have a storm."

"So it would seem."

"We can shelter at your cottage, for you live in a cottage, at least I fancy you told me so."

"I live in a cottage, but I am unaware that I mentioned the fact."

"Ah, it must have been my imagination. It plays one tricks. I am full of imaginations and fancies to-day. For instance, in the bar a moment ago I fancied I knew your face."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. I fancied there was a resemblance between you and an artist named Müller—no, no, an artist named Kolbecker. Ah! there I am again, my memory is playing me false. Upon my word, if this goes on I shall resign my position and my trade, which, after all, is a dirty trade, seeing that it is the trade of catching murderers and delivering them to the hangman. Klein was the name of the artist, he was a sculptor."

The other said nothing, his face was still immobile, but a great drop of sweat was coursing down the side of it.

The clouds were rolling in funereal masses over Reading and spreading towards the southern sky. A few large drops of rain fell on the dust of the road and the occasional grumbling of thunder sounded as if from a vast distance.

The road took a turn upon itself, and there, a hundred yards or so away in front of them, well set back from the highway and half hidden by a hedge, lay a cottage.

Freyberger was only waiting now to discover the living place of the man beside him before arresting him.

They were nearly level with the cottage gate, when, unperceived by Freyberger, the old man's left hand stole into the old man's pocket.

Next moment Freyberger, with a gasping cry and hands outspread, fell face forward in the dust of the road—sandbagged.

CHAPTER XL

WHEN he awoke it was with a sensation of pain extending all over his body. He was lying on the tiled floor of a small room, which was evidently the kitchen and living room of a labourer's cottage. A door wide open showed the glimpse of a garden gone to ruin and overgrown with a monstrous growth of weeds.

By the door, holding a spade in one hand, stood Klein.

Freyberger tried to move, but failed. His body was absolutely rigid. From the nape of his neck to his heels ran a board, to which he was splintered by turn upon turn of rope. He tried to speak—he was gagged.

Klein stood and looked at him.

After the first glance round, Freyberger saw nothing but Klein. He could scarcely see his withered face in the shadow cast by the door-post, but the hand holding the spade stood out awful in its energy and brutality, lit by the storm-light illuminating the doorway.

Then the old man, assured that his victim was awake and in full possession of his senses, began to speak in pantomime.

He pointed to his own lips and to the barred front door as if to indicate secrecy and the fact that the terrible things about to take place would never be known to the world.

Freyberger was not deaf, and the old man was not speechless, yet he never uttered a word, though he chuckled at times, making that sound which had frozen Leloir's heart when he had heard it issue from the lips of Sir Anthony Gyde in the corridor at Throstle Hall.

Then the demon at the doorway began, in pantomime, to dig with his spade, shovelling up imaginary earth from an imaginary grave; without a word he went through the postures necessary in dragging a heavy body to the graveside and flinging it in. Then he spat three times into the imaginary grave, and closed it in. All this without a word.

Then turning from his victim he went into the garden and began to dig the real grave.

Freyberger's eyes travelled about the floor of the room; they lit upon an object, it was a sandbag. He knew now what had happened to

him. Sandbagged on the road, dragged into this cottage, bound and gagged, he lay now waiting for the last act in the tragedy—his own burial.

The service for the burial of the dead would not be required over his grave, for that Klein would bury him alive he felt certain.

He lay listening to the patter of the rain on the leaves in the garden and the sound of the spade.

Incessant, rhythmical, it seemed wielded by a giant.

CHAPTER XLI

THAT night in London the Chief of the Criminal Investigation Department sat in his office. It required ten minutes to midnight, and he had just laid down his pen after several hours hard work over official correspondence and reports.

The Goldberg case was still exercising the public mind, and several editors were asking the world from editorial easy chairs what the police were paid for.

The night was warm, and through the open window came vague and fugitive sounds from the city that never sleeps; voices, the bells of passing hansoms and the clop, clop of the horses' hoofs, the hum of distant traffic.

A little draught of wind suddenly stirred the papers on the desk before him; he turned, the door was open, and Freyberger stood before him, pale, haggard and bearing a black bag in his hand. Behind Freyberger stood a stranger.

"I knocked, sir," said Freyberger.

"Ah! I was thinking. I suppose I did not hear you. Sit down—this gentleman——?"

"This gentleman's name is Hellier, sir," replied Freyberger. "I have ventured to bring him with me as he has assisted me in clearing up the Gyde case."

"Ah! what's that you say?"

"The Gyde case, sir. Also he has saved my life to-day——"

"Sit down, sit down," said the Chief, indicating chairs. "This is good, if it is as you say. I want details; but first tell me, is Sir Anthony Gyde alive?"

"No, sir; he was murdered in the cottage on the fells."

"Good God! by whom?"

"Klein."

"Is Klein alive?"

"No, sir, he is dead. He died to-day, and his body lies in the mortuary at Reading. Let me say at once, and with the humility of a man who has just escaped a terrible death, that all my assumptions were absolutely correct. Klein, *alias* Kolbecker, *alias* Müller, was the author of the Lefarge tragedy, the Gyde tragedy and all the subsidiary murders, concluding with

the murder of Bronson yesterday. Look at this."

He produced a black notebook from his pocket. The Chief examined the book; it was a volume of some hundred pages or so, every page covered with close writing.

"This book," said Freyberger, taking back the volume, "contains the life history of the greatest criminal who ever lived. It is the diary of Ludwig Spahn, *alias* Müller, *alias* Kolbecker, *alias* Klein. I mastered it in the train to-night, and from it I will sketch you the story of which the murder of Sir Anthony Gyde is but a chapter.

"Spahn was born in Munich, sixty-five years ago."

"Sixty-five?"

"Yes, sir. He was an old man."

"But the man in the photograph was a man of middle age."

"Yes, sir. He seemed of middle age, but I will explain the matter as I go on. Spahn, at seventeen, left the business to which he was apprenticed and went to Rome to study art, or, to speak more correctly, to teach it, for this strange genius had ideals of his own, and very

soon he had a little following, a cult. Vicious to the core, he never could keep money. He was always in debt. One day he murdered a banker, was caught red-handed, sentenced to death and allowed to escape the extreme penalty by that infernal law which allows murderers to escape unexterminated. He was condemned to imprisonment for life and released after twenty-five years.

"He was fifty when he left prison, full of hatred towards society and a determination to be revenged.

" He went to Paris.

" The art which was born with him remained with him, and the love of pleasure.

" He refused to be old, and, with the aid of the art of the chemist and the maker-up, he appeared to the world as a man at least twenty years younger than he was.

" He lived for years in Paris in the Latin Quarter, a notoriously vicious character, yet forgiven for the sake of his genius. His sculptures were marvellous, but his vice and laziness were to match, so he made little profit of his art and did little work.

" His hatred of the rich and well-to-do

amounted to a monomania, and he was always searching around for some means by which he might avenge himself upon them.

"To the man who hates a class, an individual of that class will serve as a butt for his revenge.

"One day, walking along a street in Paris, he saw coming towards him what seemed a little old man wearing a pinafore. It was a child wearing a mask.

"The occurrence gave him food for thought. 'If,' said he to himself, 'a man who makes these paper masks for five sous a dozen, can produce an even momentary illusion, what could not a genius do in the same direction were he to give all his mind to the matter?'

"He played with the subject in his mind.

"'If I wanted to make the mask of a man,' thought he, 'a mask that would deceive everybody by its resemblance to the flesh, how would I proceed?

"'I would first have to procure a cast of his face, or execute a bust of him exactly indentical with the reality, only very slightly larger.

"'I would then rub that face of marble with a very fine powder, and I would apply a coating

of the finest cautouch, over that a layer of stiffening varnish.

" ' I would remove the whole, and paint the interior of the cautouch with the flesh tints, thus giving the true appearance of life, *for the human face is painted* from the inside.

" ' I would then back the t ing with a thicker layer of rubber and remove the stiffening varnish from the outside.

" ' If my art did not fail me, I would now have a facsimile of my friend's or my enemy's face. Could I wear it and masquerade as him? Only on two conditions: (1) that I could make the inside of the mask a perfect mould of my own face; (2) that he was a man, a man of my own height and a man who wore glasses and a beard, for the joining at the eyes and at the neck would present an insuperable difficulty were I to imitate a clean-shaven man who did not wear glasses.'

" He brooded over the thing.

" One day he fell in with M. Lefarge, a rich jeweller, who was at times a frequenter of the Latin Quarter, and the whole diabolical plan of the Lefarge case was conceived in a flash.

" The plan of robbing and murdering a rich man in such a manner that the world would fancy that the rich man was the assassin, not the victim.

" He made a bust of Lefarge; from the bust he made Lefarge's face. Lefarge wore a beard and glasses. The making of the exterior of the mask was a bagatelle; the real difficulty was the interior, which had to be a perfect adaptation to his own features, but he did it.

" Whilst this was going on, he made a most profound study of Lefarge himself, his walk, his manner, his voice, his handwriting.

" He was, in fact, preparing to be Lefarge's understudy for an hour or two upon the stage of life.

" For three hours every day, during a space of four months, he wore the mask, conversing with himself, laughing and talking before a looking-glass, so that the thing might gain the lines and wrinkles of life.

" One day he asked Lefarge to call upon him.

" Lefarge called. Müller murdered him, and stripped him of his clothes and decapitated him.

" Then he dressed the body in his own clothes, put on the clothes of his victim, put on

his face, put on his hat, his manners, his walk and his voice.

"Then, with his victim's head in a black bag, he ran down the stairs, got into his victim's carriage, drove home, collected seventy thousand pounds' worth of jewels, drove to the corner of the Rue d'Amsterdam and disappeared.

"But Nemesis followed him. The murder of Lefarge had wakened up the lust for killing that lay like a spectre in the darkness of his soul. He killed three people to satiate this madness, as we have seen. Then he was at peace.

"Six years passed. Then, in Vienna, he met Sir Anthony Gyde.

"He was living in Vienna under the name of Klein, living extravagantly on the proceeds of the Lefarge business. He belonged to a very vicious circle, amidst whom Gyde became implicated, and he was in low water financially.

"Klein looked at Gyde, and saw that here was another chance of playing the old comedy of masks and faces. For Gyde's face and figure lent themselves entirely to the trick.

"He obtained a hold over Gyde and blackmailed him to a considerable amount, but this did not satisfy him.

" His hatred of the rich and well-to-do and respected had to be satiated.

" He made a bust of Gyde and his face, he studied him profoundly. He could reproduce his handwriting with absolute and marvellous precision, and his voice.

" The bust was made in London; he took rooms in Howland Street, broke up the bust and came to Cumberland.

" Took the cottage on the fells and awaited the coming of Sir Anthony.

" Sir Anthony called upon him, as we have seen.

" Klein killed him with a crushing blow, stripped him and decapitated him; dipped the head in a solution of chlorine which shrunk the skin and preserved it, placed the head in a black leather bag, dressed himself in his victim's clothes, assumed his face and personality, dressed his victim in his own clothes and departed.

" We know the rest. But one or two points may be made clearer.

" On his arrival in London the supposed Gyde went to his bedroom. There was one weak point about the mask. Its prolonged use caused

insufferable torment to the wearer, on account of the skin irritation it caused.

"He had removed the mask for a moment when Leloir, who had left the room, returned, and saw reflected in a looking-glass his master removing his own face. Klein, hearing the footstep of Leloir, turned.

"The expression on Klein's face at that moment is preserved for us in the retinal photograph taken from the eye of the valet, who, beholding this monstrosity, gave vent to the awful cry heard by the secretary and fell dead.

"Klein, in his hurry and the confusion caused by this incident, collected all the jewellery he could find. Having no immediate plan, he thought it safest to leave his victim's head behind him, trusting it would not be discovered for some time. He passed the night at Howland Street, going there disguised as Gyde. Next morning, early, under the same disguise, he withdrew the jewels at the bank and cashed the cheque at the jewellers'. It was a cheque he had found in the pocket of his victim, and he cashed it, not so much for the money, as to foul traces and prove to the police, by extra evidence, the existence of Gyde.

"Then he destroyed the mask and became Klein again, taking the house in St. Ann's Road's and moving in there with a few sticks of furniture hastily bought.

"Mr. Goldberg's murder followed.

"Then this gentleman, Mr. Hellier, saw him and followed him. And Klein suspected that he was at last suspected.

"He determined to disguise himself. How? Simply by becoming his own age.

"He flung away all artifice, and became the old man he was. The removal of his false teeth alone gave him twenty years of age.

"He took the cottage at Sonning, determining to lie close. But the murder instinct was too strong for him, and he killed Bronson."

Then Freyberger told his own story.

"I was lying in the cottage listening to this monster digging my grave, when, suddenly, I heard him fall crash amidst the weeds. I fainted, I believe. Mr. Hellier will tell you the rest."

"I had a reason for mixing myself up in this affair," said Hellier; "and, reading of the murder of Bronson, I came down to Sonning to make inquiries. I asked, had anyone come to

live there lately? and I was told by a woman that a gentleman had taken a cottage on the Henley Road. Fortunately, she did not say an old gentleman, or I should not have gone there.

"I went to the cottage, knocked, could get no answer, and went round the back way.

"In the back garden, by a newly-dug grave, I found a man lying, with a spade clutched in his hand; he was dead. I found Mr. Freyberger bound in the cottage, and I released him."

"Klein must have dropped dead then?" said the Chief.

"Yes," replied Freyberger. "He died of heart disease, accelerated by the excitement of digging my grave."

"One last question," said the Chief. "How about those initials tattooed on the body of Gyde?"

"They were tattooed after death," replied Freyberger, "and as a blind. He had the art of tattooing *post mortem* and, strangely enough, it was this piece of cleverness that connected the cases in my mind, and gave us our man."

. . . . .

As Hellier left the Yard that night, some-

body, who had followed him, touched him upon his shoulder. It was Freyberger.

"I want to tell you," he said, "just this. If you hadn't mixed up in the affair and scented out those subsidiary murders, I wouldn't have caught Klein."

"You mean," said Hellier, laughing, "Klein would not have caught you."

"Yes, that is the better way of putting it, for Klein was the real hero of this business; and if all criminals were made like Klein——"

"Why, then," said Hellier, "society would be lost, unless all detectives were made like Freyberger."

CHAPTER XLII

NEXT evening, at nine o'clock, Hellier called at the Langham.

Mademoiselle Lefarge, who had come to England in response to a telegram, was waiting for him.

"Well?" she asked, as she held both of his hands in hers.

"It is done," said Hellier. "To-morrow your father's name will be cleared in the sight of all men. You have suffered and waited a long, long time, but yesterday you were avenged."

. . . . .

Throstle Hall, up in Cumberland, still lies empty, waiting a tenant, for Sir Anthony's heir, a distant cousin, has no fancy for the place.

And men walk at night on the Blencarn road in couples, if they have to walk there at all,

for fear of the ghost of Sir Anthony Gyde, which waits, so the legend runs, at the gate of the field leading to the cottage on the fells.

THE END